Spiral

THE BONDS OF REASONING

2

Story by Kyo Shirodaira

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THE BONDS OF REASONING
S.p.i.r.a.l
2
STORY/KYO SHIRODAIRA
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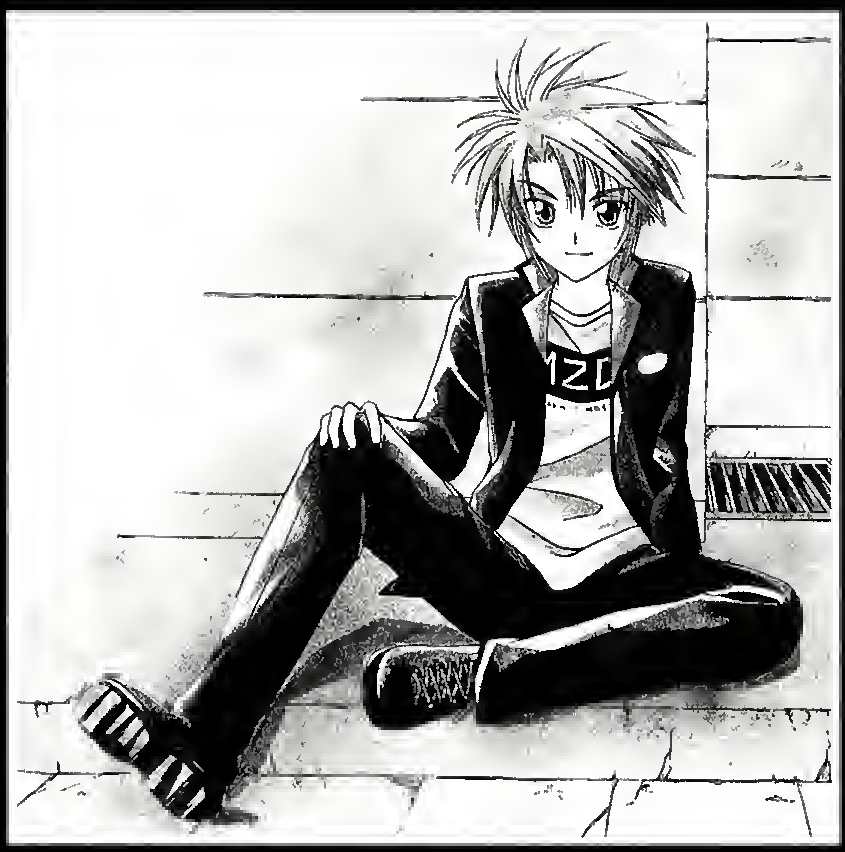
THERE ONCE WAS A MAN CALLED "THE GREAT DETECTIVE" AT POLICE HEADQUARTERS.

IN OTHER WORDS, HE IS NO MORE.

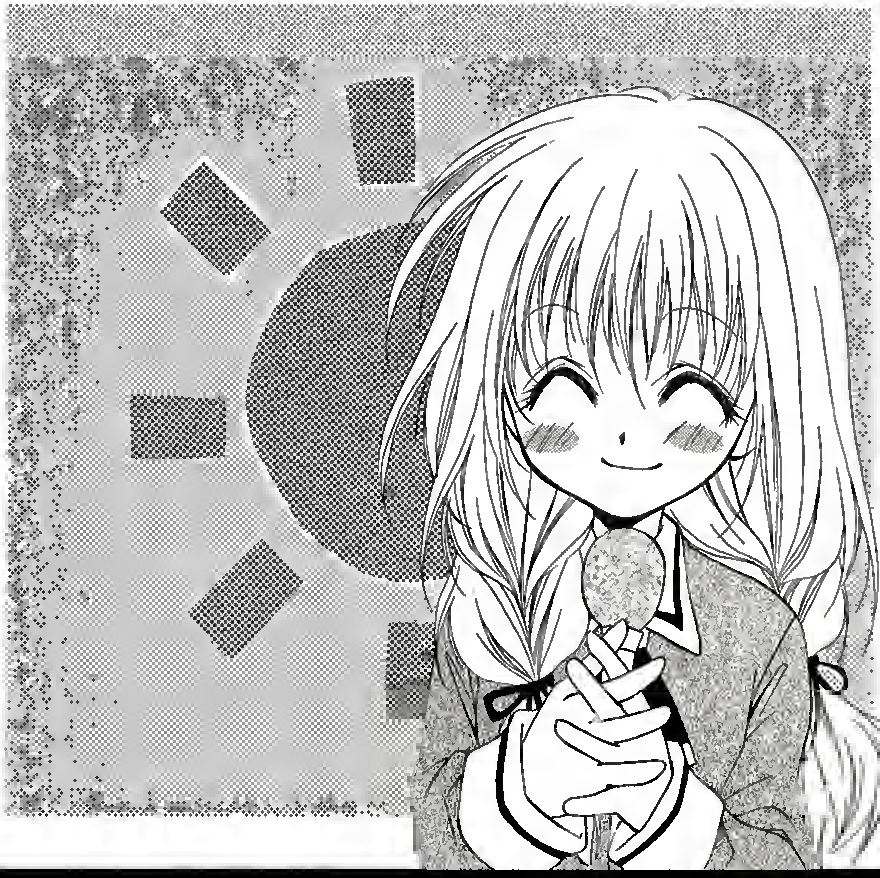
HE LEFT BEHIND THE MYSTERIOUS WORDS "I'M GOING AFTER THE BLADE CHILDREN" AND THEN VANISHED.

HIS WHEREABOUTS ARE STILL UNKNOWN.



SO THIS IS THE TALE OF HIS LITTLE BROTHER, AYUMU NARUMI.

His Destiny is On the SPIRAL



CONTENTS

CHAPTER SIX	Room Behind the Ward Lock (Part III)	5
CHAPTER SEVEN	Explosive Adventure	29
CHAPTER EIGHT	The Painful Rib	69
CHAPTER NINE	The Joy of a Believer (Part I)	103
CHAPTER TEN	The Joy of a Believer (Part II)	143

CHAPTER SIX

ROOM BEHIND THE WARD LOCK (PART III)

HAD THINGS GONE ACCORDING TO THE CRIMINAL'S PLANS...
...THE MURDER THAT OCCURRED BEHIND THESE CLOSED DOORS...
...WOULD'VE REMAINED IN DARKNESS WITHOUT EVER BEING INVESTIGATED.

THOSE BEING THE DYING MESSAGE...
...AND THE "THING THAT SHOULD HAVE BEEN" BUT WASN'T.
BUT THERE WERE TOO MANY COINCIDENCES TO BE IGNORED.
AND WE WERE ALSO GIVEN SOME DECISIVE CLUES.
THE VICTIM NEEDED MONEY TO PAY FOR SURGERY FOR HER HEART CONDITION.
ISN'T THAT CORRECT?
HEY, WHAT'S THE BIG IDE-
SFX: SU (BLOCK)
THAT'S ALSO WHEN HER EXTORTION PLANS WERE REVEALED.
BUT WHAT'S THAT GOT TO DO WITH ANYTHING?
YES. WE HAVE CONFIRMATION THAT HER CONDITION WAS SO BAD, EVEN THE MOST MINOR PROVOCATION WOULD PROMPT DANGEROUS SPASMS, WHICH IS WHY SHE WAS IN SUCH A HURRY TO UNDERGO THE SURGERY.

...!!
...WAS THERE NO MEDICINE TO SUPPRESS THE SPASMS AMONG THE VICTIM'S BELONGINGS?
WELL, IF THAT'S ALL TRUE, THEN WHY...
HOWEVER, THAT "THING THAT SHOULD HAVE BEEN WITH HER" NEVER TURNED UP.
BE IT IN A HANDBAG OR POCKET... SHE'D HAVE IT ON HER.
WHY WOULD SOMEONE PRONE TO LIFE-THREATENING SPASMS BE WALKING AROUND WITHOUT THE PROPER MEDICATION ON HER PERSON?
...THE CRIMINAL TOOK IT FROM HER AHEAD OF TIME.
AND THE REASON IS BECAUSE...

PACHIN (SNAP)
A HEART ATTACK!
I GOT IT!
AND THE REASON IS SIMPLE...
BINGO.
THE CRIMINAL INTENDED TO GIVE HER HEART AN ARTIFICIAL IMPULSE...
...TO INDUCE A SPASM THAT WOULD KILL HER.
WHEN THE BODY WAS FIRST DISCOVERED, FOUL PLAY WOULD BE THE FIRST GUESS. BUT WITH NO PARTICULAR EVIDENCE TO BACK THAT UP, THEY'D CONCLUDE FROM HER MEDICAL HISTORY THAT SHE DIED OF A HEART ATTACK.
AND THE FACT THAT IT HAPPENED BEHIND LOCKED DOORS WOULD ONLY FURTHER THAT BELIEF.
IT WOULDN'T HAVE BLOWN UP INTO A CRIMINAL CASE, AND, MOST IDEALLY FOR THE CULPRIT, IT WOULD'VE BEEN RESOLVED JUST LIKE THAT.

SFX: PATAN (SHUT)
THE CLUE IS RIGHT IN FRONT OF YOU.
YOU'RE NOT THINKING, SIS.
...HOW COULD SHE HAVE RECEIVED A BLOW TO THE HEART?
BUT WITH THE VICTIM BEHIND LOCKED DOORS...
THEN THE CULPRIT SHOWED UP AFTER THE VICTIM HAD ALREADY ARRIVED AND KNOCKED ON THE DOOR TO SIGNAL HER TO OPEN IT.
KON (KNOCK)
THEN, HE INSTRUCTED HER TO LOCK THE DOOR TO PREVENT ANY INTERRUPTIONS AND TO STICK THE KEY IN FROM THE INSIDE TO KEEP ANYONE FROM PEEKING.
HE ALSO PROBABLY TOLD HER SOMETHING LIKE "THE KNOB'S BROKEN" TO KEEP HER FROM USING IT.
THE CRIMINAL USED A TRANSACTION AS THE EXCUSE TO CALL THE VICTIM DOWN TO THE LIBRARY LATE AT NIGHT.
REMEMBERING THAT SHE WAS NOT TO USE THE KNOB, SHE NATURALLY TOOK HOLD OF THE KEY TO OPEN THE DOOR.

BUT THIS WAS JUST WHAT THE CRIMINAL WANTED.
AT THAT MOMENT, THE OUTSIDE AND INSIDE BECAME CONNECTED THROUGH THAT KEY.
THE OUTSIDE AND THE INSIDE BECAME CONNECTED...
THE DYING MESSAGE...
RAI...MON...RAI...
HA (GASP)

IT CARRIED RIGHT THROUGH THE VICTIM'S FINGERS AND SHOCKED HER HEART!
AH HA!
YES!
THE CRIMINAL USED SOMETHING LIKE A STUN GUN TO PASS AN ELECTRIC CURRENT THROUGH THE KEY.
AND HER DYING MESSAGE WAS TO COMMUNICATE THAT SHE'D BEEN ELECTROCUTED WITH "LIGHTNING."
IT'S POSSIBLE TO DIE FROM ELECTRIC SHOCK, AND IT'S NOT THAT DIFFICULT TO RUN AN ELECTRIC CURRENT AT THE RIGHT VOLTAGE AND FOR THE PROPER DURATION TO DO IT.
NOT TO MENTION, THE KEY WAS MADE OF COPPER ALLOY...
...A HIGHLY CONDUCTIVE METAL.

ZAAAA (SSSSHHH)
THE ELECTRIC IMPULSE CAN BE REGULATED. AT THE TIME OF THE CRIME, IT WAS POURING OUTSIDE, SO THE HUMIDITY MUST HAVE BEEN HIGH; A HUMAN BODY WOULDN'T HAVE BEEN VERY DRY.
THE OCCURRENCE OF BURNS DEPENDS ON THE STRENGTH OF THE ELECTRIC SHOCK AND THE DRYNESS OF THE BODY.
WOULDN'T THE CRIMINAL HAVE CONSIDERED THE ELECTRICAL MARKS AND DISCHARGES THAT'D BE FOUND ON THE BODY?
BUT THERE WAS A CHANCE AN ELECTRIC SHOCK WOULD LEAVE BURN MARKS ON HER FINGERTIPS.
ALSO, IT'S PRETTY RARE FOR SUCH BURN MARKS TO FORM. AND ONLY IF THE DEATH HAD BEEN CLEARLY ESTABLISHED AS BEING CAUSED BY ELECTROCUTION WOULD THE DISCHARGES EVEN BE CONSIDERED, SO THAT WASN'T A PROBLEM.
BUT...!
THAT'S SUCH A RISKY CRIME TO PULL OFF. IF HE'D FAILED THEN-
THE CHANCE OF SUCCESS WAS HIGH.

EVEN IF HE FAILED, HE COULD VERY WELL HAVE FORGONE THE LOCKED ROOM AND GONE RIGHT IN TO SHOCK HER DIRECTLY, INDUCING THE FATAL SPASMS.
LIKE THIS
HE'D JEOPARDIZE HIS SAFETY, BUT NOT ENOUGH TO MAKE IT A BAD PLAN.
HE'D INDUCED A HEART ATTACK THAT WOULD KILL HER.
SO FAR, SO GOOD...
BUT IT'S THE SECOND HALF WHERE THINGS STARTED TO FALL APART.
PERHAPS THE VICTIM, HAVING TAKEN THE BLOW TO THE HEART, TRIED TO GET THE MEDICINE THAT WAS PRESUMABLY IN HER BAG...
BUT HER LEGS WERE WEAK FROM THE SPASMS, MAKING HER FALL.
GA (WHACK)
IT WAS THEN THAT SHE SMASHED HER HEAD AGAINST THE CHAIR...
...SUFFERING A FATAL CONCUSSION.
SEVERE BLEEDING RESULTED...
...AND HER CONSCIOUSNESS FADED...

ALL HE COULD DO WAS STRAIN HIS EARS TO CATCH THE VICTIM'S LAST BREATH.
BEING OUTSIDE THE ROOM, THE CRIMINAL DIDN'T REALIZE ANY OF THIS.
AND IN HER DYING MOMENTS, SHE TOOK A STAB RIGHT BACK AT THE PERPETRATOR, LEAVING BEHIND THE "RAIMON" DESIGN ASSOCIATED WITH ELECTRICITY.
THAT'S WHY THE BODY AND THE DYING MESSAGE WERE DISCOVERED AS IS.
W-WELL THEN...!
IF THAT'S ALL TRUE, THEN THE CRIMINAL COULD BE ANYBODY!!
WHO DID IT!?

FROM THE GET-GO, THE MURDER WAS GOING TO LOOK LIKE A HEART ATTACK.
SO WHAT WOULD HAVE HAPPENED IF IT HAD BEEN DISCOVERED THAT THE MEDICINE WASN'T ON THE VICTIM?
...LOGIC BINDS THE CRIMINAL.
INDEED. UP TO THIS POINT, IT COULD BE.
HOWEVER...
KNOWING ABOUT HER SPASMS AND NEED FOR MEDICATION, THE POLICE WOULD HAVE BEEN SUSPICIOUS GIVEN ITS ABSENCE AND WOULD HAVE INSISTED ON AN INVESTIGATION.
DO YOU REALLY THINK THE CULPRIT WOULD NEGLECT SUCH A FLAW IN HIS PLAN?
THE CRIMINAL HAD TO RETURN THE MEDICINE TO THE VICTIM.
SO HIS PLAN HAD TO FACTOR IN WHEN HE COULD DO THAT.
NOW I ASK YOU...
IF THE PLAN HAD GONE OFF WITHOUT A HITCH...
...WHAT WOULD THE MURDERER'S SCHEDULE HAVE TO HAVE BEEN BEFORE THE BODY WAS FOUND?

FIRST, SAYOKO-SAN WENT TO THE LIBRARY AND NOTICED THAT THE KEY WAS IN THE LOCK.
UNABLE TO ENTER THE ROOM, SHE WENT TO THE DINING HALL AND ASKED REIKO-SAN FOR THE SPARE KEY.
SHE BOWED HER HEAD AND WENT ALONG TO THE LI-BRARY.
WHEN THE LOCK WAS OPENED AND THE VICTIM'S BODY FOUND WITHIN...
...THE FIRST TO ENTER THE AREA, GO TO THE BODY, AND TOUCH IT...
...HAD TO BE YOU.

WHEN SA-YOKO WASN'T PAYING ATTEN-TION...
...YOU WERE GOING TO STICK IT BACK IN HER BAG.
YOU HAD PLENTY OF OP-PORTUNI-TIES TO DO IT.
BUT THERE WAS A CHANGE IN PLANS.
KEI-SAN ALSO CAME TO THE SCENE.
WITH THAT, YOU LOST YOUR CHANCE TO DISPOSE OF THE MEDICINE...
...AND LEFT BEHIND THE MOST SOLID CLUE AGAINST YOU!
I DON'T KNOW IF IT WAS BY YOUR MASTER'S ORDERS, BUT...
...THE CRIME ITSELF WAS COMMITTED BY YOU AND NO OTHER.

WHAT HAPPENED HERE...
...WAS ALL MY OWN DOING.
THE MASTER KNEW NOTHING OF MY PLANS.
THAT WOMAN WAS USING THE YOUNG MISTRESS TO THREATEN THE MASTER.
THE MASTER WAS SO DISTRESSED. I COULDN'T VERY WELL LET IT CONTINUE.

YOU'RE RIGHT.
I AM THE CRIMINAL.
YOU WOULD SERVE YOUR MASTER EVEN IF IT MEANT MURDER?
YOU KNOW THAT PLANT WHERE THERE WAS AN ACCIDENT THAT RESULTED IN 15 CASUALTIES?

人殺し!
!
WELL, THEY SAY THAT GIRL'S PARENTS WERE BEHIND IT.
SIGN: MURDERER!
ABUSE... SLANDER... AND POVERTY...
AT SOME POINT, MY FACE LOST THE CAPACITY TO SHOW FEELINGS.
BUT THEN...
COME WORK IN MY HOME.

THERE'S NO REASON FOR YOU TO TAKE THE BLAME.
When I was in need, the bread you gave me...
...was as precious to me as life itself.
Even if I took seven days and seven nights...
...even then, I would not be able to express my gratitude to you.

IT'S TRUE...
IT WAS LIKE MAGIC!!
WHAT'S WITH THIS GUY!? HE SOLVED IT IN NO TIME!
WHA-
HE POSSESSES THE BLOOD OF A GREAT DETECTIVE...
MIZUE NOHARA...
SHE CAME TO ASK FOR MY HELP IN ESCAPING, THREATENING TO AWAKEN SAYOKO'S CURSE.

I HAD TO COMPLY.
I THOUGHT I'D LUCKED OUT WHEN SHE DIED, BUT THEN TAKAKO ADACHI WAS NEXT...
IT SEEMS THE "BLADE CHILDREN" NEVER LET PEOPLE GO.
SHE WANTED MONEY AND A FORGED PASS-PORT.
THAT'S ALL.
I DON'T KNOW THAT MUCH MYSELF.
ONLY THAT IT'S A TERM THAT'S HURT SAYOKO.
JUST WHAT ARE YOU RE-FERRING TO WHEN YOU SAY THE "BLADE CHILDREN"?
IT HAP-PENED WHEN SHE TRIED TO LEAP TO HER DEATH.
YOU'RE AWARE THAT SHE HAS AMNESIA, CORRECT?
WELL, THAT WASN'T CAUSED BY SOME AC-CIDENT.

IT WAS A LONG TIME AGO.
I RECEIVED A PHONE CALL FROM MY DAUGHTER, WHO HAD ELOPED AND DISAPPEARED, ASKING ME TO TAKE CARE OF HER DAUGHTER.
MY DAUGHTER DIED SOON AFTER FROM AN ILLNESS AND LEFT ME WITH TEN-YEAR-OLD SAYOKO.
SAYOKO WAS ALWAYS AFRAID OF SOMETHING.
SHE'D MUTTER TO HERSELF THAT SHE WAS A CURSED CHILD.
IN THE END, SHE TRIED TO KILL HERSELF.
BUT SHE SURVIVED AND LOST HER MEMORIES ALONG WITH HER PAST, BECOMING THE BRIGHT GIRL YOU NOW KNOW.
I HAVE NO DOUBT THAT SHE WENT THROUGH SOME AWFUL TRAUMA IN HER PAST.
EVEN THOUGH SHE'S ONLY...
...STILL JUST A CHILD...

I TRIED TO KILL MYSELF...?
YEAH.
YOU CAN GET YOUR MEMORY BACK AND FIND OUT THE REASON WHY.
BUT I FIGURE YOUR PAST SELF WOULDN'T WANT THAT.
BUT MY LIFE NOW IS A LIE...
THERE'S SOMEBODY WHO SACRIFICED HERSELF TO TRY AND PROTECT THAT LIE.

...!
ARE YOU WILLING TO FACE THE TRUTH...
...EVEN IF IT MEANS DENYING THE VALUE OF THAT?
IT'S A TRADE SECRET!
THAT'S WHAT I WANNA KNOW.
...AND BY THE WAY, JUST HOW DID YOU KNOW ABOUT THE POLICE INVESTIGATION?
WE CAN'T INVESTIGATE ANYTHING MORE ABOUT THAT GIRL.
PON (PAT)
TO THINK ANOTHER VICTIM'S COME OUT OF THIS-
BUT JUST WHAT IS MY OLDER BROTHER AFTER?

HERE WE GO AGAIN...
?
I KNEW IT!
I THOUGHT I RECOGNIZED YOU FROM SOMEWHERE...
YOU'RE THE LITTLE BROTHER OF THAT BIG-TIME PIANIST, KIYOTAKA NARUMI!!
!
THAT REMINDS ME. I HAVEN'T SEEN YOU AT ANY CONCERTS FOR A WHILE. YOU STILL PLAY?
ALWAYS WITH THE PIANO...

CHAPTER SEVEN

EXPLOSIVE ADVENTURE

PASHA (FLASH)
ZAWA (CHATTER)
ZAWA
PASHA

ZAWA
ZAWA
ZAWA
ZAWA
His solo piano album has sold a record one million copies worldwide, making him an unquestionable child prodigy in the piano world.
Now, at seventeen, this quarter-English boy...
A pianist by age fourteen...
...he earned his title in America in the twinkle of an eye and just last year recorded the soundtrack to a car commercial, launching him into stardom here in Japan as well.
...Eyes Rutherford...
...has come to Japan for the first time to hold a recital.
ANY WORDS FOR YOUR FANS?
SU (STEP)
BA (SNATCH)

I DON'T CARE WHO.
JUST SOMEBODY BRING NARUMI'S LITTLE BROTHER TO ME.

ぼ
BOOO (SPACED-OUT)
YOU'RE THAT KIYOTAKA NARUMI'S LITTLE BROTHER!
SIGN: NEWSPAPER CLUB
I HAVEN'T HEARD YOUR NAME COME UP FOR A WHILE. WHAT HAPPENED TO YOUR PIANO PLAYING?
YOU QUIT!?
I QUIT.

OF ALL THE THINGS! HOW COULD THAT NARUMI'S LITTLE BROTHER QUIT THE PIANO!?
WHAT ARE YOU GOING ON ABOUT?
W-WAIT JUST A MINUTE!
YOU KNOW YOU'VE GOT THE TALENT!
DON'T MESS WITH ME!
GUI (GRAB)
IT IRKS ME TO SAY IT, BUT HIS SKILL'S THE REAL THING!
BAN (BAM)
NA-RU-MI-SAAAAN!
HA (GASP)
HAAH...

I'VE GOT SOME BREAKING NEWS!
TAKASHI SONOBE-SAN, WHO'D BEEN IN A COMA SINCE HE WAS ATTACKED BY NOHARA-SAN, HAS WOKEN UP.
WHAT? REALLY?
THE BLADE CHILDREN...
THE REMAINING CLUES COULD ONLY BE WITH THAT GEEZER SONOBE.
OH, YEAH.
SAY, NARUMI-SAN?

Next up! We have a set of seven all-purpose kitchen knives!
THEY USED TO SAY YOU HAD THE "FINGERS OF AN ANGEL" AND CARRIED THE JAPANESE PIANO WORLD ON YOUR BACK.
I KNOW ALL ABOUT IT.
LET ME HEAR YOU HAVE A GO AT THE PIANO. PLEASE?
SFX: MU! (HMPH!)
SIGH SOMETHING'S STRANGE
THEY'RE SELLING A SET OF SEVEN ALL-PURPOSE KITCHEN KNIVES.
IT ALSO COMES WITH AN ANTI-BACTERIAL CUTTING BOARD AND HIGH QUALITY PAULOWNIA CHEST.
UM...
QUIET, I CAN'T HEAR THE NUMBER TO CALL.
SFX: GAKKU GAKKU (SHAKE SHAKE)
がっくがっく
COME OOON! LET ME HEAR YOU PLAY!!
AAARGH! SHUT UP! SHUT UP!
WHY WOULD KITCHEN KNIVES COME WITH A PAULOWNIA CHEST?
SFX: BUSU (HUMPH)

I ALREADY QUIT PIANO.
IF YOU WANT TO HEAR A PIANO, GO LISTEN TO A CD OVER THERE OR SOMETHING.
...uu...
Aah...! How cruel...
I've gone without food serving you and devoting myself to you so I could be of help and this is how you treat me...!
超無視。
TOTALLY IGNORING HER.

SOOOO THAT'S HOW IT'S GONNA BE? THEN FEEL THE WRATH OF HIYO'S PUNCH!
NURRAAAAH!
OH, YEAH. NOTHING LESS FROM ALL-PURPOSE KITCHEN KNIVES. THEY CAN EVEN CUT A KOUJIEN IN ONE SWOOP.
FOUND YOU, NARUMI JUNIOR!
BAN (BAM)
NI (SMILE)

COME WITH ME.
CLUBAREO
CHERRY&RADUSI
EYES-SAMA IS CALLING FOR YOU.

...WHAT?
チャ
CHA (CLATCH)
SO YOU'VE FOUND NARUMI'S LITTLE BROTHER FOR ME?
KYAAA!

IN THE FLESH!!
IT'S E-Y-E-S-SAMAAAAA!!!!
UM! I-I'M A HUGE FAN OF YOURS!
PLEASE LET ME SHAKE YOUR HAND! AND CAN I HAVE YOUR AUTO-GRAPH?
SARA SARA (SKRITCH SKRITCH)
すらすら
KYAAA!!
I'M MAKING THIS A FAMILY HEIRLOOM!!
WELL, I'VE GOTTA GO NOW!!
SHE REALLY A COLLEGE STUDENT?
I'LL COME TO SEE YOU PERFORM AGAIN, YOU CAN COUNT ON IT!
.....

SEEMS YOU REALLY MADE A BIG SHOW OF CALLING ME DOWN HERE.
SO WHAT DO YOU WANT WITH ME?
PLAY ME A SONG.
.....
...WHAT DID YOU SAY?
PLAY ME A SONG.
LET ME HEAR JUST WHAT THE PIANO WORLD'S LEGENDARY NARUMI BLOODLINE CAN DO.

SORRY BUT...
...I QUIT PIANO A LONG TIME AGO.
DON'T LIE TO ME.
GUI (TUG)
SFX: GA (GRAB)
YOURS ARE THE HANDS OF ONE POSSESSED BY THE PIANO.
EVEN NOW, THEY'RE HOT FROM ALL THEIR PRACTICE.
.....

I DON'T HAVE TIME FOR THIS.
ARE YOU SO AFRAID TO ADMIT YOU CAN'T MATCH YOUR BROTHER?
BA (SLAM)
YOU'VE BEEN BLESSED WITH TALENT.
BUT YOU KNOW DEEP DOWN THAT, AT BEST, YOUR SKILL'S ONLY AN IMITATION OF YOUR BROTHER'S.
YOU CAN'T POSSIBLY BEAT THE ORIGINAL.
PITA (PAUSE)
GO!

.....
YOU'LL ALWAYS BE A LOSER.
FU (SIGH)
...TOO BAD.
SFX: ZAWA ZAWA (CHATTER CHATTER)
AT LEAST COME HEAR MY RECITAL.

SFX: ZAWA ZAWA (CHATTER CHATTER)
EYES RUTHERFORD...
YOU'LL ALWAYS BE A LOSER.
...DAMMIT!

GI (CREAK)
WHAT'S WITH THAT LAME ATTITUDE?
HE'S MADE IT NO FUN THIS WAY.
...JUST WHAT IS HE!?
THAT CREEP...
NOW FOR A PRESENT HE WON'T FORGET.
SFX: PURURURURU PURURURURU (RRRRING RRRRING)
SFX: GACHA (CLICK)
HELLO, THIS IS THE POLICE STA-
HEY THERE, I'VE GOT WONDERFUL NEWS FOR YOU.
BUT I'VE ONLY GOT FIVE MINUTES SO I'LL MAKE THIS QUICK.

Enough to blow the roof off the concert hall!
IT'S PACKED WITH 200 KILOS OF EXPLOSIVES.
!!?
The thing is i had some time to kill, so i've planted a bomb under a very special seat.
I-IT'S A BOMB!!
HEY, DID SOMETHING HAPPEN?
SOMETHING MUST'VE HAPPENED.
?
OVER HERE?
SEARCH QUICKLY NOW!
BATA
BATA
BATA
BATA (TMP)

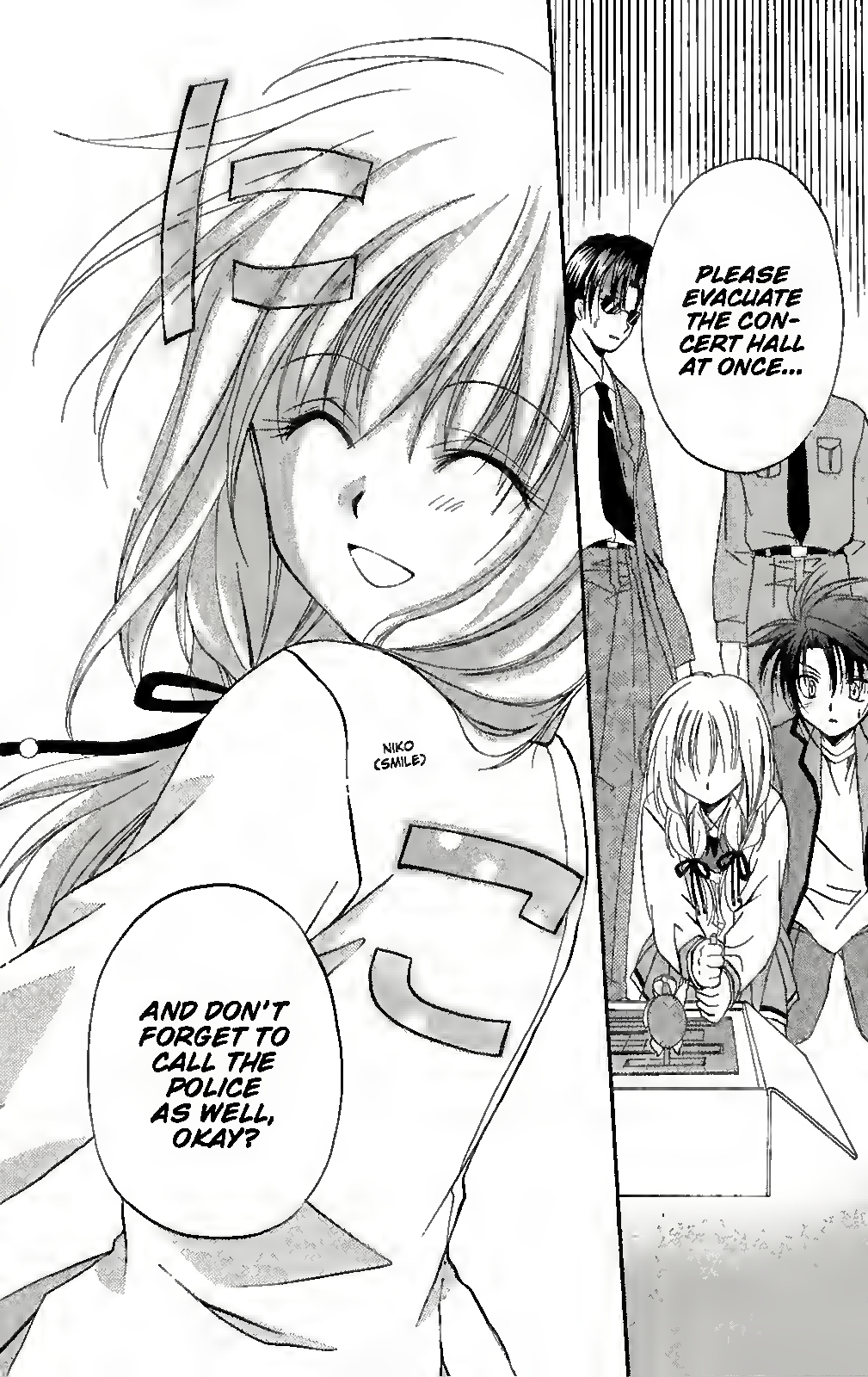
WE JUST GOT A CALL FROM A CRIMINAL SAYING HE'S PLANTED ONE HERE!!
WAAA
WAAA
THAT IDIOT! HE DIDN'T HAVE TO ANNOUNCE IT!
TCH!
WAAA
GO (BUMP)
.....
...HERE IT IS...
!
YOU FOUND IT?
WHAT IS THAT...?

!!?
HEY THERE! I'M A RIVER TURTLE WHO HAILS FROM CHINA. YOU CAN CALL ME LUCKY!
REMEMBER IT WELL!
SFX: GAKO (SPRING)
WE DON'T HAVE MUCH TIME LEFT!
AAW, EVERYONE'S IN A PANIC?
THAT'LL MAKE DISMANTLING THIS IMPOSSIBLE.
IF YOU MESS WITH ME THE WRONG WAY, WE'LL ALL GO BOOM!
THERE'S ONLY ONE WAY TO STOP ME.
AND THAT'S BY PUNCHING IN THE RIGHT NINE-DIGIT KEY CODE.
YOU HAVE TO ENTER THE NINE NUMBERS IN THE RIGHT ORDER.
SEE THE KEYPAD TO MY SIDE?

THERE'S ONLY ONE RIGHT ORDER.
AND, OF COURSE, IF YOU MESS UP, YOU'LL GO BOOM RIGHT THERE ON THE SPOT.
AS A SPECIAL SERVICE, I'VE ALREADY GIVEN YOU THE FIRST NUMBER.
1
I'VE ALREADY GIVEN YOU PLENTY OF HINTS!
IT'S OKAY. AS LONG AS YOU GUYS GOT WIT, COURAGE, AND LUCK, YOU CAN DEFUSE THIS, NO SWEAT!
BAN (SLAM)
THIS IS AN OUT-RAGE!
FINE, FINE. I'LL MAKE THIS EVEN EASIER FOR YOU.
YOU SEE THAT STICK COMING OUTTA THE TOP OF THE BOX?
HOLD ONTO IT.
IT'LL INCREASE YOUR TIME LIMIT TO THIRTY MINUTES.
BUT THE MOMENT YOU LET GO OF IT, YOU'LL GO BOOM.
IT'S HEAT SENSI-TIVE.
1

BUT IF YOU'RE FINE WITH THAT, GO RIGHT AHEAD!!
ARE YOU SO AFRAID TO ADMIT YOU CAN'T MATCH YOUR BROTHER?
THERE WON'T EVEN BE A SCRAP OF FLESH LEFT!
IF THIS ISN'T DEFUSED, YOUR BODY'LL BE BLOWN TO SMITHEREENS.
BUT WHOEVER THAT BRAVE PERSON IS CAN'T RUN AWAY.
IF YOU'RE BRAVE ENOUGH, GO AHEAD AND GRAB IT.
SOME-BODY, GRAB ONTO THAT STICK!
YOU'LL ALWAYS BE A LOSER.
YOU'LL ALWAYS BE...
SU (REACH)
HURRY! WE'RE DOWN TO ONE MINUTE!
B-BUT IF I DO...!

GYU
(GRAB)
PI
(BEEP)
!!!


PLEASE EVACUATE THE CONCERT HALL AT ONCE...
NIKO (SMILE)
AND DON'T FORGET TO CALL THE POLICE AS WELL, OKAY?

NARUMI JUNIOR...
SFX: ZAAAA (FFSSSHHH)
.....
KYAAAA
キャアアア?
WAAA
WHAT'LL YOU DO NOW?
CAN YOU REALLY SOLVE IT?

THEY WERE GETTING IN THE WAY, SO AFTER KICKING THEM OUT WE ONLY HAVE A LITTLE TIME LEFT...
THE BOMB SQUAD THEY CALLED IN GAVE UP.
YOU REALLY ARE AN IDIOT.
WHY'D YOU PUT YOURSELF IN SO MUCH DANGER?
HEY, WHAT'S THERE TO WORRY ABOUT?
WE CAN DEFUSE THIS BOMB.
THE CRIMINAL SAID IT HIMSELF. IF WE HAVE WIT AND COURAGE, WE CAN DISMANTLE THIS.
SO YOU CAN DO IT, NARUMI-SAN.
STOP BEING STUPID.

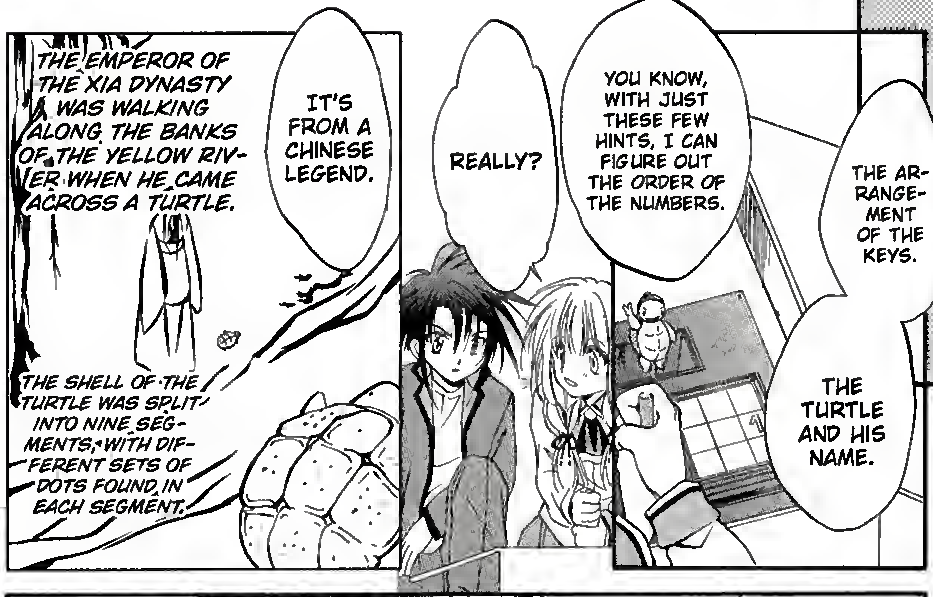
DO YOU KNOW HOW MANY COMBINATIONS THERE ARE FOR THOSE KEYS?
40,320.
HE SAID IF WE GOT IT WRONG, WE'D DIE, SO...
...WHY WOULD YOU TAKE UP SUCH A DANGEROUS BET?
THE ARRANGEMENT OF THE KEYS, THE POSITIONS OF THE NUMBERS...
...WHAT OTHER HINTS WERE THERE?
A TURTLE DOLL...? WHAT COULD IT ALL MEAN...?
HEY, NARUMI-SAN?
WHY'RE YOU ALWAYS SAYING YOU QUIT PIANO?
YOU'RE STILL PRACTICING IN SECRET.
AND YOUR SKILL COULD STILL BE CALLED GENIUS.

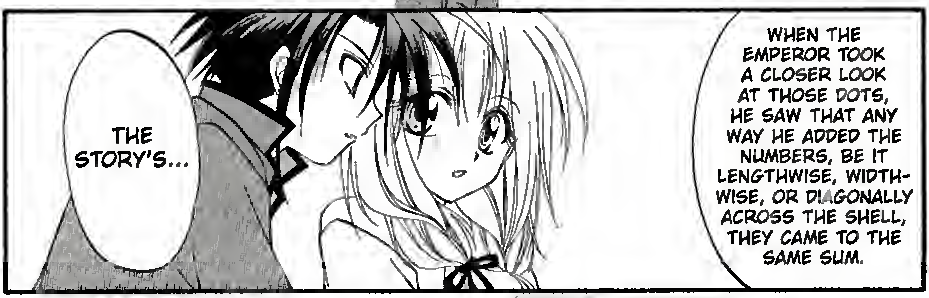
MY PERFORMANCE IS JUST AN IMITATION OF MY BROTHER'S.
NO MATTER WHAT, MY OWN PERSONAL SOUND NEVER COMES OUT...
.....
YOU SURE KNOW YOUR STUFF
YOU HEARD WHAT THE CREEP SAID.
EVEN WHEN I TRY TO PLAY FROM MY HEART, IT ALWAYS BECOMES LIKE MY BROTHER'S STYLE.
BUT...
...IT'S NOT LIKE I'M TRYING TO COPY MY BROTHER.
BEFORE I REALIZED IT, THEY WERE ALL THE SAME AS MY BROTHER'S.
THE SUBJECTS I EXCEL AT, TASTE IN GIRLS...
...AND THAT DOESN'T ONLY APPLY TO PIANO.

GUESS WE'RE JUST YOUR TYPICAL BROTHERS...
BUT NO MATTER HOW ALIKE WE SEEMED, HE WAS FAR BETTER THAN ME.
SO NO MATTER HOW HARD I TRY...
...I'LL NEVER MATCH MY BROTHER.
.....
AS FOR PIANO...
EVEN IF I HATE IT, PIANO ALWAYS REMINDS ME THAT...
...ANYTHING I'VE EVER WANTED BECOMES MY BROTHER'S.
THAT'S WHY IT HURTS ME SO MUCH TO PLAY

BUT I CAN'T BRING MYSELF TO QUIT ALTO-GETHER.
BECAUSE DEEP DOWN I REALLY DO LIKE PIANO.
IF I COULD, I'D PRACTICE UNTIL MY FINGERS FELL OFF...
NARUMI-SAN, DO YOU HATE YOUR OLDER BROTHER?
.....
I LOOK UP TO HIM.
MY BROTHER COULD DO ANYTHING.
HE KNEW ALL SORTS OF THINGS...
HA (GASP)

すSUKU (STAND)
ENOUGH SMALL TALK.
WE'RE DEFUSING THIS BOMB.
WAIT, WASN'T THERE SOMETHING MY BROTHER TAUGHT ME A LONG TIME AGO...?
CHINA... A TURTLE...
NINE KEYS...
A SQUARE... NUMBERS...
THIS MIGHT BE IT!


THE EMPEROR OF THE XIA DYNASTY WAS WALKING ALONG THE BANKS OF THE YELLOW RIVER WHEN HE CAME ACROSS A TURTLE.
THE SHELL OF THE TURTLE WAS SPLIT INTO NINE SEGMENTS, WITH DIFFERENT SETS OF DOTS FOUND IN EACH SEGMENT.
IT'S FROM A CHINESE LEGEND.
REALLY?
YOU KNOW, WITH JUST THESE FEW HINTS, I CAN FIGURE OUT THE ORDER OF THE NUMBERS.
THE ARRANGEMENT OF THE KEYS.
THE TURTLE AND HIS NAME.


THE STORY'S...
WHEN THE EMPEROR TOOK A CLOSER LOOK AT THOSE DOTS, HE SAW THAT ANY WAY HE ADDED THE NUMBERS, BE IT LENGTHWISE, WIDTHWISE, OR DIAGONALLY ACROSS THE SHELL, THEY CAME TO THE SAME SUM.

MAGIC SQUARE
A SQUARE FORMATION IN WHICH THE SUM OF THE NUMBERS IN ANY ROW, COLUMN, OR DIAGONAL IS THE SAME. IN A 3X3 MAGIC SQUARE, THAT NUMBER IS 15.
八 一 六
8 1 6
三 五 七
3 5 7
四 九 二
4 9 2
INCIDENTALLY, SINCE THEN IT'S BEEN CALLED "RAKUSHO."
...ABOUT THE WORLD-FAMOUS, MYSTERIOUS MAGIC SQUARE.

AND IN THAT GROUP, ONLY TWO IN WHICH THE NUMBER ONE IS IN THE SPOT SPECIFIED TO US.
4 3 8
9 5 1
2 7 6
2 7 6
9 5 1
4 3 8
THERE ARE ONLY EIGHT COMBINATIONS POSSIBLE FOR THE 3X3 MAGIC SQUARE.
BUT I DON'T KNOW FOR SURE WHICH ONE IT IS.
YOU DID IT AGAIN, NARUMI-SAN!
IF WE ENTER ONE OF THOSE ORDERS INTO THE KEY, WE SHOULD BE ABLE TO DEFUSE THE BOMB.
...ALL WE HAVE IS LUCK.
IN THE END...
IT'S JUST LIKE THE TURTLE SAID.

DON'T WORRY!
NARUMI-SAN, YOU'RE NOT MEANT TO DIE IN A PLACE LIKE THIS.
IT'S A 50-50 CHANCE OF LIFE OR DEATH.
SU (TOUCH)
DON'T HATE ME IF I GET THIS WRONG.
.....
HERE GOES NOTH-ING...
TAN (TAP)

SFX: SHIIN (SILENCE)
PHEW...
.....
MMM
DON'T SIGN ME UP FOR ANOTHER ONE OF THESE...
WE'RE JUST LUCKY WE DEFUSED IT.
HEY, ARE YOU EVEN LISTENING?

GEEZ...
SOMEHOW, IT FEELS LIKE MY BROTHER SAVED ME AGAIN...
あはははは
A-HA-HA-HA-HA-HA!
!?
CONGRAT-ULATIONS, NARUMI JUNIOR!
THE BLADE CHILDREN HAVE BEEN WAITING FOR YOU.
!!?
SIGN: MIYASHITA GENERAL HOSPITAL
宮下総合病院

IN ANY CASE, SINCE LONG BEFORE...
...YOU'VE HAD SOMETHING TO DO WITH THE BLADE CHILDREN AND WERE MEETING WITH KIYOTAKA NARUMI.
SONOBE-SAN.
A LOT HAS HAPPENED SINCE YOU WERE KNOCKED OUT BY MIZUE NOHARA.
SIGN: TAKASHI SONOBE
I...
WHAT EXACTLY DOES "THE BLADE CHILDREN" MEAN?
...!!
"THE BLADE CHILDREN..."
THOSE KIDS ARE DANGEROUS...
I TRIED TO KILL MIZUE NOHARA.
BUT SHE ALMOST TOOK MY LIFE INSTEAD.

WE HAVE TO KILL THEM...
SO HE DEFUSED IT, EH?
WIT, COURAGE, AND LUCK...
SO NARUMI'S LITTLE BROTHER'S GOT ALL THAT, EH?
GISHI (CREAK)
HEY, KIYOTAKA...
WILL YOUR LITTLE BROTHER REALLY TURN OUT TO BE THE KEY TO SAVING THE BLADE CHILDREN?

CHAPTER EIGHT
THE PAINFUL RIB

JUST WHAT ARE THE BLADE CHILDREN?
SONOBE SAID IT.
THOSE KIDS ARE DANGEROUS... WE HAVE TO KILL THEM...
THAT TURTLE SAID IT.
CONGRATULATIONS, NARUMI JUNIOR!
THE BLADE CHILDREN HAVE BEEN WAITING FOR YOU.

はた。
HATA. (PAUSE.)
YOU'RE HIDING SOME-THING.
AREN'T-CHA?
AREN'T YOU?
HMMMM...
EVER SINCE GETTING MIXED UP IN THAT BOMB SCARE, YOU'VE BEEN ACTING STRANGE, YOU KNOW THAT!?
YOU CUT CORNERS WITH YOUR COOKING, YOU WON'T DO THE LAUNDRY ANYMORE, AND YOU KEEP FOR-GETTING TO BUY MORE SHAMPOO!
GATA (CLATTER)
PUT A LID ON IT! WHO WOULDN'T ACT STRANGE AFTER NEARLY BEING BLOWN TO SMITHER-EENS!?
AND BESIDES, YOU CAN DO THOSE THINGS YOURSELF!

I KNOW YOUR NERVES AREN'T THAT DELICATE!
'FESS UP TO EVERYTHING YOU KNOW AND GET IT OFF YOUR CHEST!
HMPH!
YOU'RE ONE TO TALK, SIS.
SFX: GAKU GAKU GAKU GAKU (SHAKE SHAKE SHAKE SHAKE)
AFTER SONOBE WOKE UP, WHAT'D YOU HEAR FROM HI-
SFX: MOGA (MMPH)
THAT'S NONE OF YOUR BUSIN-ESS.
HMPH
MEY. (HEY.)
THIS HAS TO DO WITH MY BROTHER.
TELL ME SOMETHING AT LEAST!

KIDS SHOULDN'T STICK THEIR NOSES INTO ADULT BUSI-NESS!
I'LL FIND KIYOTAKA-SAN. I WILL.
.....
SO YOU SAY.
SFX. KACHA (CLINK)
YOU HAVEN'T UNCOVERED ONE CLUE TO FINDING HIM FOR THE PAST TWO YEARS.
I'M SIXTEEN YEARS OLD.
I CAN HELP YOU, SIS.
YOU DON'T HAVE TO DO EVERYTHING YOURSELF.

TIME FOR ME TO GO TO WORK!
.....
THE JERK. SHE GOT AWAY.
THANKS FOR TAKING CARE OF THE REST.
GATA (CLATTER)
SFX: BASA (FLAP)
SFX: GACHA (CLANK)
SIGN-L: TENSEI JINGO

WHAT FIRST GOT YOU INTERESTED IN PIANO?
SFX: NIYA (SMIRK)
.....
THE DESIRE TO KILL...
COME AGAIN?
MY EARLIEST MEMORY IS FROM WHEN I WAS THREE.
THERE WERE THESE ANTS.
AND AS THEY ALL MARCHED IN A ROW, I PICKED THEM UP ONE BY ONE AND CRUSHED THEM.
FOR GOD KNOWS HOW MANY HOURS.

WHEN I WAS FIVE, I STRANGLED OUR PET HUSKY WITH WIRE.
THAT WAS WHEN MY MOM STARTED TO REALIZE THAT SOMETHING WAS WRONG.
SU (LIFT)
THEN IT WAS BUTTERFLIES, CRICKETS, GRASSHOPPERS...
I JUST LOVED KILLING THEM.
SFX: GASHAN (CRASH)
NI (SMIRK)
SHE TRIED TO OCCUPY THE HANDS OF HER SON WHO DESIRED BLOODSHED BY TYING HIM TO THE PIANO DAY AND NIGHT.

...BUT THAT WASN'T A JOKE AT ALL.
THAT WAS A JOKE.
...JUST KIDDING.
I... I SEE...
BLOODSHED IS OUR FATE...
DO YOU UNDERSTAND? OUR FATE...
AFTER ALL... WE CHILDREN ARE ALL CURSED...
BUT WHAT DO YOU SUPPOSE THEY MEAN BY "CURSED CHILDREN"?

THOSE THREE ALL SAID THAT ABOUT THEM-SELVES.
AND THEY ALL SUFFERED BY KNOWING IT.
SAYOKO SHIRANA-GATANI.
IKUO TSUJII.
MIZUE NOHARA.
ONE THING'S FOR SURE. THE RIDDLE BEHIND THAT IS WHAT KILLED TWO OF THEM.
COME ON, LIEUTEN-ANT...
LET'S JUST GIVE IT UP ALREADY.
...WHY KIYO-TAKA-SAN DISAP-PEARED...
AND IT'S ALSO...

SONOBE WON'T TELL US ANYTHING MORE.
AND WE'VE ALREADY BEEN WARNED BY THE HIGHER UPS.
IF YOU KEEP UP THIS INVESTIGATION, YOU'LL GET IN TROUBLE FOR SURE.
WATAYA, I WANT YOU TO DO SOMETHING FOR ME.
YEAH?
AND WHAT'S THAT?
X-RAYS OF BOTH TSUJII IKUO'S AND SAYOKO SHIRANAGATANI'S THORACIC CAVITIES.
I DON'T CARE WHAT IT TAKES, GET A HOLD OF THEM FOR ME.
.....
WHAT'RE YOU GONNA DO WITH THOSE?

PON (POOF)
Tuuurtle! Tuuurtle!
AFTER LOOKING OVER MIZUE NOHARA'S AUTOPSY REPORT...
...THEY DISCOVERED SOMETHING UNUSUAL...
A meeeedium tuuurtle!
A biiiig turtle!
A little, itty bitty turtle!
KUU (SQUEEZE)
"HEY THERE, NARUMI JUNIOR!"
"SOMEBODY'S IN A BAD MOOD, YES HE IS!"

YOU DON'T HAVE TO TALK LIKE THAT.
SHUN (STING)
"HOW ABOUT I CHEER YOU UP?"
SHUT IT.
I'M REALLY WORRIED ABOUT YOU.
EVER SINCE WE HEARD THAT TURTLE'S MESSAGE, YOU'VE BEEN ACTING WEIRD.
FUNNY
THEN DON'T GO SHOVING THAT THING IN MY FACE!
YOU TRYING TO HARASS ME?
IT'S THAT TURTLE...
WHAT'S ON YOUR MIND?
TURTLE-SAN DIDN'T DO ANYTHING WRONG!
SEE? HE'S JUST A CUTIE-WOOTIE! ♡
SEE?
がばっ
SFX: GABAFUN (SHOVE)

CONGRATULATIONS, NARUMI JUNIOR!
HE CALLED ME "NARUMI JUNIOR."
AND TO USE THAT NAME WITH ME COULD ONLY MEAN...
...WHOEVER PLANTED THAT BOMB KNOWS MY BROTHER.
YEAH, THAT MIGHT BE.
SO THEN YOU'VE CAUGHT A GLIMPSE OF YOUR LOST BROTHER'S SHADOW.
SHOULDN'T YOU BE HAPPY?
BUT I DON'T LIKE THE WAY I CAUGHT IT.

WHY ARE THEY INVOLVING ME?
DOES IT MEAN MY BROTHER TOLD THEM ABOUT ME?
THE VERY REASON MY BROTHER DISAPPEARED...
...WAS TO KEEP HIS FAMILY FROM GETTING INVOLVED IN DANGER. AT LEAST I ALWAYS THOUGHT IT WAS...
WHAT'S HE THINKING? WHAT ABOUT ME HAVE THEY BEEN WAITING FOR...?
HYOKO (PEER)
BROODING WON'T SOLVE ANYTHING.
LET'S DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT.
JUST GO OVER THERE, WOULD YOU?
HMPH!
YOU SURE YOU SHOULD BE TALKING THAT WAY TO PEOPLE?

うふふ
U-FU-FU
I THINK YOU OWE ME QUITE A BIT, WOULDN'T YOU AGREE, NARUMI-SAN?
DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA HOW MUCH I'VE HELPED YOU THANKS TO MY IN-FORMA-TION?
ZOWA (CHILL)
AND I'VE GOT INFORMATION ON TAKASHI SONOBE, TOO, YOU KNOW!
OKAY, OKAY, I GET IT.
DON'T YOU SEE THAT YOU'D BE IN A PICKLE WITHOUT ME?
I F-F-F-F-FEEL COLD A-A-A-ALL OF A SUD-DEN...
HEH

SIGN-L (TOP): SUZUKI FIRM; (BOTTOM) BANDOU

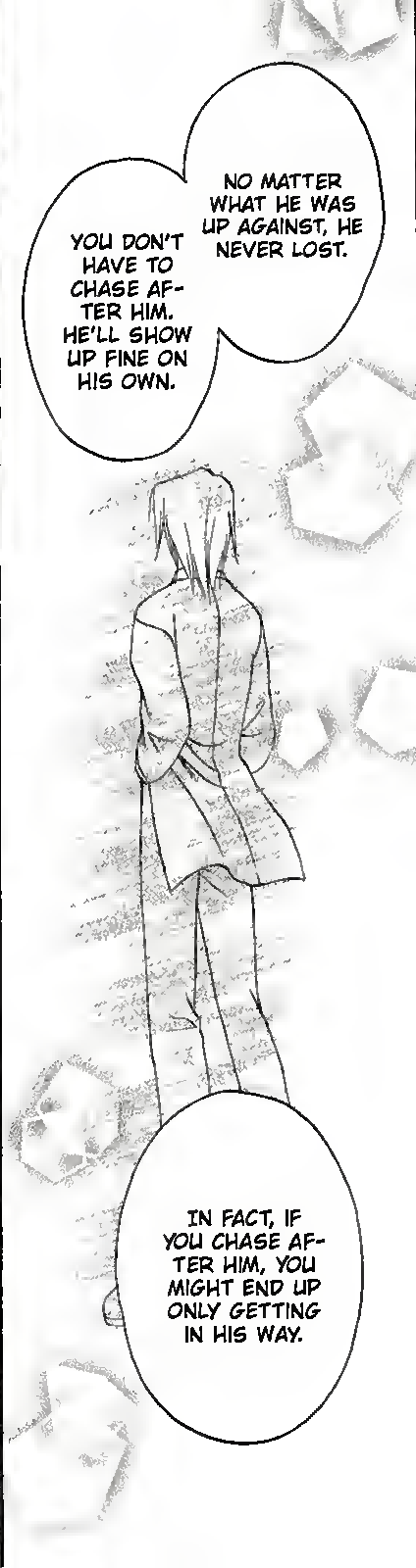
.....
PLEASE TAKE ALL THE TIME YOU NEED. ENJOY!
I JUST WANTED TO SEE THE REAL THING FOR ONCE. ♡
WHY'RE YOU EATING THAT?
BUT I DIDN'T WANT TO WASTE MY MONEY JUST TO TRY IT.
...I HEAR YA.
ZU (SIP)
...SO.
SONOBE SAID THEY HAVE TO KILL THE CHILDREN?
WELCOME.
THAT'S RIGHT.

SFX: KARAN (DING-A-LING)

SEEMS IT'S TRUE THAT HE TRIED TO KILL NOHARA-SAN BUT GOT ATTACKED BEFORE HE COULD.
SONOBE-SAN'S RE-GAINED CON-SCIOUSNESS BUT...
...SINCE HE CAN'T SPEAK AND IS STILL UNSTABLE, THE DOCTOR PUT A STOP TO ANY FURTHER QUESTION-ING.
THOSE'RE ALL THE DETAILS I GOT.
MEANING THERE ARE STILL CLUES TO BE HAD, EH?
SO MY SIS WASN'T JUST WASTING HER TIME THESE PAST TWO YEARS.
NEWFORK
.....
WHY ARE YOU PURSUING THE MYSTERY OF THE BLADE CHIL-DREN, NARUMI-SAN?

I'M NOT PURSUING IT BECAUSE I WANT TO.
IT'S JUST THE ONLY CLUE I HAVE TO FINDING MY BROTHER.
!
HMM...
AND WHY ARE YOU LOOKING FOR YOUR BROTHER?
WELL, FOR STARTERS, BECAUSE HE'S MY BROTHER.
OF COURSE I'M WORRIED ABOUT WHERE HE IS.
...YOU'RE LYING.
NARUMI-SAN, YOU ALREADY KNOW...
...HOW AMAZING AN INDIVIDUAL YOUR BROTHER IS.

...AT LEAST, THAT'S WHAT YOU'RE THINKING, I BET.
YOU'RE NOT WORRIED ABOUT HIS SAFETY AT ALL.
.....
THE PERSON YOU'RE WORRIED ABOUT, NARUMI-SAN...
...IS YOUR SISTER, ISN'T IT?


NO MATTER WHAT HE WAS UP AGAINST, HE NEVER LOST.
YOU DON'T HAVE TO CHASE AFTER HIM. HE'LL SHOW UP FINE ON HIS OWN.
IN FACT, IF YOU CHASE AFTER HIM, YOU MIGHT END UP ONLY GETTING IN HIS WAY.

HOW MUCH DO YOU KNOW ...?
I KNOW ALL ABOUT IT.
YOUR "SISTER," MADOKA-SAN, MARRIED YOUR BROTHER, KIYOTAKA-SAN.
IN OTHER WORDS...
...YOU AND YOUR SISTER AREN'T RELATED BY BLOOD. SHE'S JUST YOUR SISTER-IN-LAW.
THEY HADN'T EVEN BEEN MARRIED A YEAR WHEN MY BROTHER DISAPPEARED.
WHEN MY SISTER FOUND OUT HE WAS GONE, SHE TOOK IT REALLY HARD.

EVEN NOW, HE'S WHAT SHE WORRIES ABOUT MOST.
AND FOR THE TWO YEARS SINCE THEN, SHE'S BEEN DESPERATE TO FIND HIM.
SOMETIMES I EVEN FIND HER CRYING TO HERSELF IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT...
.....
YOU REALLY LOVE YOUR SISTER, DON'T YOU, NARUMI-SAN?
IF I DON'T HURRY UP AND FIND MY BROTHER...
...I DON'T KNOW WHAT'LL HAPPEN TO HER...

I CAN'T STAND TO SEE HER UNHAPPY.
IT'S NOT LIKE THAT.
WE MAY NOT BE BLOOD RELATIVES, BUT SHE'S STILL MY SISTER.
EVEN THOUGH I WORRY SO MUCH ABOUT HER...
.....
SFX. KOTO (CLACK)
SHE ABUSES HER BROTHER-IN-LAW TO NO END.
...SHE PUNCHES AND KICKS AND WRINGS MY NECK...
...AND IS ALWAYS GOING ON ABOUT WHAT SHE WANTS.

OH...
THAT'S...
WELL, IF IT ISN'T OFFICER WATAYA!
AH, IT'S YOU GUYS!
WHAT'RE YOU DOING HERE?
YOU FIND ANY NEW INFORMATION ON THE "BLADE CHILDREN" CASE?
WELL, WELL...
STOP TALKING ABOUT TOP SECRET POLICE BUSINESS!
WHAT YOU WANT A PIECE OF ME?
NIKO (SMILE)
You sure you can say that?

DO SOMETHING...! DO SOMETHING ABOUT HER!!
SHE'S GOT A HOLD OF MY WEAKNESS AND IS BLACKMAILING ME!
DON'T YOU THINK THAT'S TOO MEAN!?
ガシ
ガシ
SFX: GAKU GAKU (SHAKE SHAKE)
IF YOU DON'T HEAR US OUT, I'LL HAVE TO EXPOSE THAT SECRET OF YOURS...
DON (BUMP)
ドン
SFX: SA (FLIP)
BUT IT'S NOT RIGHT TO USE BLACKMAIL!
WHAT DO YOU WANT ME TO DO ABOUT IT?
OW!
GET OFFA ME!
ドン
カ
SFX: DOKA (KICK)
OH, YOU.
I HAVE OTHER SOURCES, TOO.
IS THAT HOW YOU GET A HOLD OF POLICE INFORMATION?

U-FU-FU-FU-FU!
I'M JUST GLAD I'M ON HER SIDE...
ANYWAY, BACK TO BUSI-NESS.
IF YOU FIND ANYTHING, JUST LET US KNOW.
WE'RE COUNTING ON YOU
PON (PAT)
THANK YOU VERY MUCH! ♡
D-D-D-D-DAMMIT!
I'LL GET THEM SOME DAY!
Ruther-ford...

You went too far with that bomb scare.
BOSU (FLOP)
ぼす
IT'S NOT LIKE IT WENT OFF IN THE END, SO I DON'T SEE THE BIG DEAL.
KUH KUH KUH!
I THINK I'LL BE HAVING FUN FOR A WHILE.
THAT NARUMI JUNIOR'S MORE FUN TO PUSH AROUND THAN I'D THOUGHT.
DON'T MESS WITH HIM SO MUCH.
YOU HEARD KIYOTAKA.
"Don't hurry and bide your time."
WELL, I NEED TO DO SOMETHING TO PASS THE TIME.
MUKU (PISSED)
むく

AND BESIDES...
...I HAVEN'T SAID THAT I APPROVE OF NARUMI JUNIOR YET.
WHAT'RE YOU GONNA DO WITH THESE X-RAYS?
I NOTICED A STRANGE NOTATION IN MIZUE NOHARA'S AUTOPSY REPORT.
SEE FOR YOURSELF.
MIZUE NOHARA'S MISSING A RIB.

...I KNEW IT!
"IT'S AS THOUGH IT WAS REMOVED THROUGH SURGERY SOON AFTER BIRTH."
I DIDN'T LIKE THE SOUND OF THAT SO I HAD THE EXAMINER LOOK INTO IT AND...
WHAT IS THE MEAN-ING OF THIS!?
LIEUTENANT! THIS IS TOO STRANGE!
IT'S THE ONE COMMON FEATURE SHARED AMONGST THOSE KNOWN AS THE "BLADE CHILDREN."

BUT WHY...?
MY MISSING RIB HURTS...
THE MARK OF THE CURSED CHILDREN HURTS...
"DON'T HURRY AND BIDE YOUR TIME," EH?

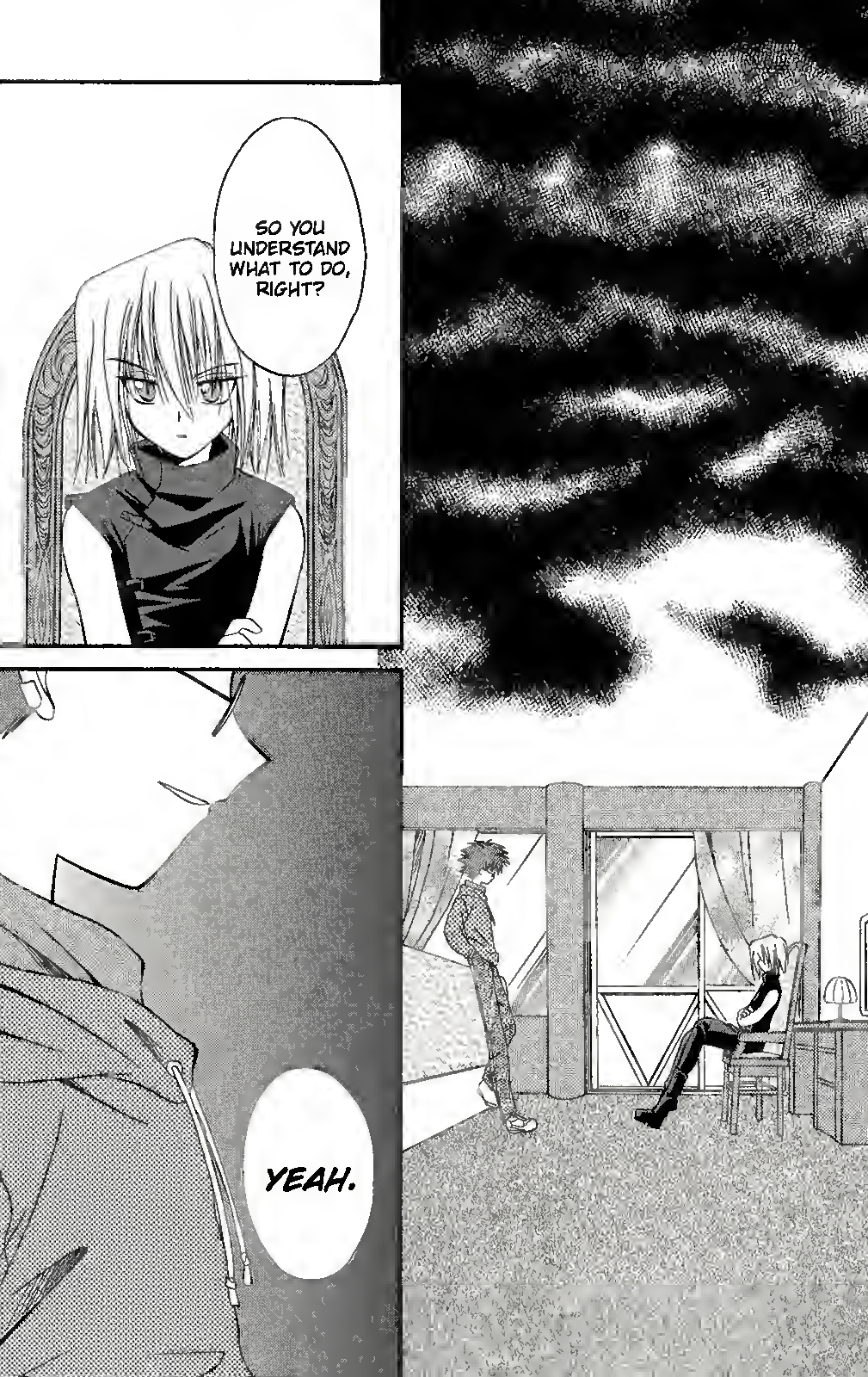
DOES HE REALLY THINK THE CURSED ONES...
...HAVE THAT MUCH TIME?
HE-AAH!
MNOMOM
HYOOO (WOOO)
BA (FLAP)
...DID YOU JUST SEE MY PANTIES?
HIGH SCHOOLERS SHOULDN'T BE WEARING UNDERWEAR WITH DECALS ON THEM.

THE CURSED CHILDREN...
THE DANGEROUS CHILDREN...
THE BLOODTHIRSTY CHILDREN...
THE CHILDREN MISSING A RIB...
THE CHILDREN SUFFERING AGONY...

WHAT ARE THE BLADE CHILDREN?
HYOI (LAVOID)

THAT DOES IT...
BLOODSHED IS OUR DESTINY.
JUST WHAT ARE THE "BLADE CHILDREN"...?

CHAPTER NINE
THE JOY OF A BELIEVER (PART 1)


SO YOU UNDERSTAND WHAT TO DO, RIGHT?
YEAH.

BUT YOU DON'T REALLY CARE IF NARUMI JUNIOR DIES FROM MY GAME, DO YOU...
.....
KIYOTAKA'S ALREADY AGREED TO IT.
SUWA (STAND)
...HUH.
HE'S A PRETTY CRUEL OLDER BROTHER.
SU (STEP)
HYU (WHIP)
PASHI (CATCH)

AN IRIS?
IT'S A REQUEST FROM KIYOTAKA.
.....
...YOU SCATTER THESE AT THE SCENE.
HE ASKS THAT NEXT TIME YOU DO ANY-THING...

I'M SURPRISED THE IRIS IS YOUR FAVORITE FLOWER.
IT'S NOT LIKE YOU TO HAVE SUCH TRADITIONAL TASTE.
MADOKA...
...DO YOU KNOW WHAT IRISES MEAN?
JIRIRIRIRIRI (BBBBBBRRRRIIIIING!)

ゴロ～…
GORON (ROLL)
...UGH.
モゾモゾ
MOSO MOSO (SQUIRM SHIFT)
PIPIPIPIPI (CHEERFUL RINGING...)
ゴソ
GOSO (RUMMAGE)
UUUGH, T-TEN MORE... MINUTES...
BAN (BAM)
WAKE UP!! BREAK-FAST!!
SZK
NOOOO!
DON'T GIVE ME THAT "NO!"

FOR CRYING OUT LOUD! AND YOU CALL YOURSELF A LADY...
ピ
ピロロロロ…
SFX. PIRORORORO (RRRRING)
ピロロロロ…
PIRORORORO
.....
MUKU (IPK)
?
...NARUMI SPEAKING...
...HUH? MIYASHITA GENERAL HOSPITAL?
TAKASHI SONOBE'S BEEN KILLED!!?

SFX: ZAWA ZAWA ZAWA (MURMUR MURMUR MURMUR MURMUR)
...COMING THROUGH.
!!
GACHA (KACHAK)
SIGN: MISHIMA GENERAL HOSPITAL

THIS IS REALLY AWFUL...
WHAT ON EARTH...
...HAP-PENED HERE?

THE VICTIM WAS SMOTHERED, HIS LEGS AND ARMS RESTRAINED...
...AND THEN HIS ENTIRE BODY WAS STABBED.
THE MURDERER AVOIDED ALL THE VITAL ORGANS TO MAKE THE PAIN LAST AS LONG AS POSSIBLE.
THEN HE FINALLY STABBED A KNIFE INTO THE VICTIM'S THROAT.
SONOBE WENT INTO SHOCK FROM THE EXTREME HEMORRHAGING AND DIED.
THE ESTIMATED TIME OF DEATH WAS SOMETIME BETWEEN TWO AND THREE O'CLOCK THIS MORNING.
WHY IS THIS HAPPENING!?
DON (BAM)
GIRI... (CLENCH...)
WHY ARE ALL THE CLUES TO KIYOTAKA-SAN DISAPPEARING ON ME!?

THAT'S A MESSED UP WAY TO KILL SOMEONE.
THIS IS A LITTLE DIFFERENT FROM A HATE-DRIVEN CRIME...
WHOEVER DID IT REALLY ENJOYED MAKING THE VICTIM SUFFER.
I GUESS WE COULD CALL THE MURDERER A SICK-MINDED SADIST, EH?
AYUMU!
WHAT'RE YOU DOING HE-
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
I WAS WITH YOU WHEN YOU GOT THE CALL, REMEMBER?

UWAAAA... WHAT A GORE FEST.
WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE!?
YOU CAN'T JUST SKIP SCHOOL!
YOWCH!
QUIT IT! THIS IS A LITTLE MORE IMPORTANT THAN THAT!
SFX: GURI GURI (NOOGIE NOOGIE)
THAT'S DISGUSTING.
AAAH!!!
NOT THE BRAIDED GIRL, TOO!!
SORRY FOR INTRUDING! ♡
HEY!
WHAT'RE YOU DOING HERE!?
I DIDN'T TELL YOU ANYTHING ABOUT THIS.

"...A TRADE SECRET."
YOU WERE GONNA SAY?
THAT'S...
HOW DID YOU ...?
I'VE HEARD THAT LINE ONE TOO MANY TIMES.
I DID NO SUCH THING!
DON'T TELL ME YOU PLANTED A BUG IN MY HOUSE.
SU (STEP)
SONNY.
HM?
GASH! (GRAB)
YOUNG LADY.

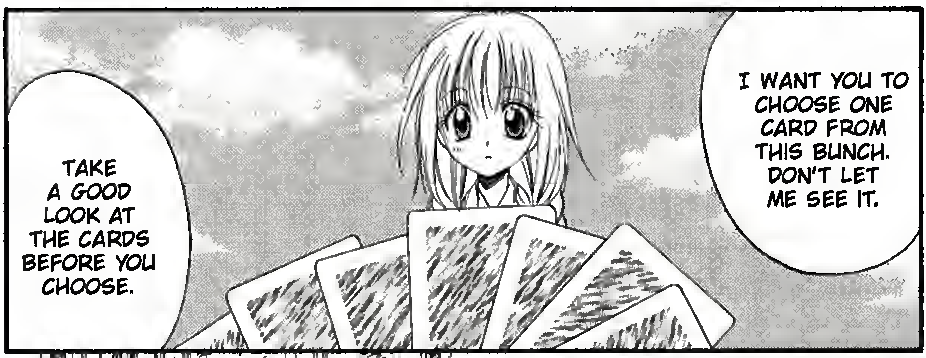
SFX: PE (TOSS)
GET OUT!
SIS! JUST BELIEVE IN ME FOR ONCE!
YOU CAN'T FIND MY BROTHER ON YOUR OWN!
STOP RAMBLING...
SFX: SA (HOIST)
GO (BASH)
...AND GET TO SCHOOL!!!

...OUCH.
UUU...
I'M SKIPPING SCHOOL TODAY.
HEY! NARUMI-SAN!
PIGEONS! PIGEONS!

LOOK HOW MANY THERE ARE!
DON'T MAKE SUCH A FUSS OVER PIGEONS.
THERE'S NOTHING CUTE ABOUT THEM AT ALL.
SFX: BASA BASASA (FLAP FLAP)
.....
WHY ARE YOU ALWAYS SO COLD, NARUMI-SAN?
HOW WOULD IT HELP TO BE NICE TO YOU?
SFX: KURU (TURN)
...OH, I SEE!
SO THAT'S HOW IT IS, NOW IS IT!?
?
...LITTLE LADY.
DO YOU HAVE A MINUTE, LITTLE LADY?

HUH?
ARE YOU TALKING TO ME?
YEAH.
WELL, WEEELL...
YOU'RE A REAL CUTIE.
AND YOU'RE FUNNY, TOO.
KUH KUH!
TRY TELLING THAT TO THAT BOY SPACING OUT OVER THERE.
PLAY AN EASY GAME WITH ME.
?
A GAME?

BA (FLASH)
I'VE GOT A SEVEN CARD TRUMP RIGHT HERE.


I WANT YOU TO CHOOSE ONE CARD FROM THIS BUNCH. DON'T LET ME SEE IT.
TAKE A GOOD LOOK AT THE CARDS BEFORE YOU CHOOSE.

THEN I'M GOING TO USE REASONING...
...TO DISCOVER WHICH CARD YOU CHOSE.
OOH, THIS SOUNDS FUN.
RIGHT?
I DO IT TO PRACTICE ANALYZING PEOPLE.

I DON'T NEED SUCH A SEEDY-LOOKING STUFFED ANIMAL.
IT'S NOT CUTE OR ANY-THING.
THAT SO...?
SO YOU WANNA PLAY ALONG?
IF I GET IT WRONG, I'LL GIVE YOU THIS "AUTISTIC, ANE-MIC-LOOKING CHICK" PLUSHIE I JUST HAP-PENED TO PICK UP.
NOW YOU'RE TALKING!
OH, WELL. THEN I'LL TREAT YOU TO SOME JUICE AF-TER!
OKAY! NOW LET ME PICK!

HMM! I KNOW WHICH ONE I WANT TO PICK.
HMMMM...
HMMM. HMMM...
.....
SU (REACH)
OKAY! THIS ONE!
FIRST, I CAN CROSS OFF THE POSSIBILITY OF IT BEING ONE OF THE THREE ACES.
TON (TAP)
WHY'S THAT?
I CAN FEEL YOUR PARTIALITY TO CERTAIN CARDS.
SO YOU FELT THERE WAS AN ADVANTAGE IN THAT THE REMAINING CARDS HAD ONE MORE CARD, RIGHT?
IF YOU'D WANTED AN ACE, YOU'D HAVE BEEN LIMITED TO THREE CARDS.

UNLESS YOU'RE SOMEONE WHO REALLY PUZZLES OVER THINGS OR ARE RIDICULOUSLY SIMPLE-MINDED, YOU WOULDN'T CHOOSE THE ACE.
YOU DON'T LOOK TO BE THAT SIM-PLE-MINDED A PERSON, LITTLE LADY...
...OR THAT PERPLEXED.
...WELL.
THAT LEAVES YOU FOUR CARDS...
MEAN-ING THAT YOUR CARD IS...
NI CGRIND
QUEEN OF DIA-MONDS...
...NO, WAIT...
THE TWO... OF SPADES.

.....
ペラ
PERA (FLAP)
HMPH.
むっ
AM I THAT PREDICTABLE?
HA!
...CUTE LITTLE LADY.
NORMALLY, I'D MAKE A PASS NOW BECAUSE THIS TELLS ME AN AWFUL LOT ABOUT A GIRL...
SU (HOLD)
ス!

POKO (CHOP)
DON'T GET ROPED IN BY THE PICK-UP LINES OF WEIRDOS.
AH! NARUMI-SAN.
THAT WAS A SLY WAY TO PUT IT.
AFTER YOU SUGGESTED IT WAS THE QUEEN, YOU HAD TIME TO WATCH HER REACTION.
YOU COULD CHANGE YOUR LINE AS MUCH AS YOU WANTED, JUDGING BY HOW SHE REACTED.
THAT'S ALSO WHAT IT LOOKED LIKE WHEN YOU RULED OUT THE ACE.
EXACTLY.
BUT I ONLY HAD ONE CHANCE TO CORRECT MY GUESS, RIGHT?
DON'T YOU THINK IT WAS PRETTY IMPRESSIVE THAT I NAILED IT AFTER ONLY ONE GO?
.....
I SMELL A RAT

Oi
I WAS ALSO WORKING OFF THE HIGH PROBABILITY THAT THE LITTLE LADY WOULDN'T CHOOSE THE KING OR THE TEN OF HEARTS.
OKAY, OKAY. I'LL SPILL THE BEANS.
I FIGURED THAT SHE'D HAVE A "BAD FEELING ABOUT THEM FOR SOME REASON" AND SUBCONSCIOUSLY AVOID CHOOSING THEM.
NIYA (SMIRK)
EARLIER, THE TWO OF YOU...
...WITNESSED THE MURDER SCENE OF TAKASHI SONOBE, RIGHT?
!?

!!
THE BLOOD SPLATTER ON THE FLOOR AT THE SCENE...
...SHOULD HAVE LOOKED A LOT LIKE THE PATTERN ON THE TEN OF HEARTS.
SO AFTER SEEING THAT, SHE GOT A BAD FEELING ABOUT THE CARD, GET IT?
AS FOR THE KING...!
KIN (FWIP)
THE KING HOLDS A SWORD IN HIS HAND.

AND AFTER HAVING SEEN A SLICED-UP CORPSE...
...THE OLD MAN HOLDING A SWORD ON THE CARD... WOULDN'T BE VERY APPEALING TO LOOK AT.
.....
NI (SMILE)
HYO (WHIP)
THIS IS THE SAME KIND OF KNIFE THAT SHOULD'VE BEEN STABBED INTO SONOBE'S NECK.
SFX: ZAKU (THUNK)
...!
SUKU (STAND)
DON'T TELL ME IT WAS YOU...

NAME'S ASA-ZUKI.
KOUSUKE ASAZUKI.
I'M ONE OF THE BLADE CHILDREN...
!!
YOU WANNA FEEL MY CHEST?
I ASSURE YOU, I'M MISSING A RIB.

?
IT'S A SHARED TRAIT AMONG THE "BLADE CHILDREN" THAT MADOKA FOUND.
SOMEHOW, THE KIDS WHO GO BY THAT NAME LOOK AS THOUGH ONE OF THEIR RIBS WAS REMOVED RIGHT AFTER THEY WERE BORN.
.....
SO YOU'RE THE ONE WHO KILLED SONOBE?
ニヤ!
NIY (SMIRK)
...YES!

DIDN'T YOU KNOW?
HE WANTED TO KILL ALL OF US BLADE CHILDREN.
IF I HADN'T DONE IT, HE'D HAVE GOTTEN ME FIRST.
IT WAS LEGITIMATE SELF-DEFENSE!
TSK TSK. DON'T CALL THE POLICE.
!
I'M SURE THERE'S MORE YOU WANT TO ASK ME, NO?
SFX: SW (BLOCK)
!!

I'VE GOT INFORMATION ON KIYOTAKA NARUMI, TOO, IF YOU'RE INTERESTED.
DON'T YOU WANT TO KNOW ABOUT THE BLADE CHILDREN?
DON'T YOU WANT TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE CURSED AND BRANDED CHILDREN?
HOW 'BOUT IT, NARUMI JUNIOR?
NII (GRIN)
WHAT ARE YOUR CONDITIONS?
I HIGHLY DOUBT YOU'RE GENEROUS ENOUGH TO GIVE ME THAT INFORMATION WITHOUT A PRICE.
LET ME TEST YOUR WIT, COURAGE, AND LUCK.
IT'S JUST LIKE THAT.
YOU REMEMBER THAT MAGIC SQUARE BOMB, RIGHT?
SIMPLE.

IF YOU CAN BEAT MY GAME, I'LL ANSWER ALL YOUR QUESTIONS!
AND IF I CAN'T?
I GET TO PUT YOU IN A BIT OF DANGER.
EH?
VUN (BZZ)
YEAH.
ぽか
POKA (OPEN)
LIKE THIS.
A...
A BEE!!?

TAKE THAT!
BYU- (FWAP)
BECHI (SPLAT)
SA (WHIP)
SA (FLAP)
NARUMI-SAN...
JUST NOW... YOU USED ME AS A SHIELD, DIDN'T YOU...?
AH!
SFX: GOA (RAWR)
YOU SCOUN-DREL! HOW LOW OF YOU TO USE A GIRL AS A SHIELD!
WAH! HEY!!
HEAR ME OUT!!
AND WHERE'D YOU GET THAT FAN, ANYWAY?
LISTEN, OKAY?
I HAVE TO WATCH OUT FOR SUZUME-BACHI.
THANKS, YOU REALLY SAVED ME.
ERGH!!

AND SOME PEOPLE EVEN DIE BECAUSE OF THEM!
YEAH, WELL, WITH ME THERE'S 100% CHANCE OF DYING IF I'M STUNG!
GETTING STUNG BY THEM HURTS!
YEAH, WELL, SO DO I!!
OW!
SFX: BESHI (SLAP)
I'M TALKING ABOUT ANAPHYLAXIS*...
I'M HYPERSENSITIVE TO SUZUMEBACHI VENOM AND COULD DIE OF ANAPHYLACTIC SHOCK IF I'M STUNG.
...HUH?
SO THAT'S WHY...
...WHEN I SEE A BEE, I RUN AWAY.
UWAAA... TOTALLY LAME.
HMM!!

* ANAPHYLAXIS – A SEVERE ALLERGIC REACTION WHICH OCCURS WHEN A PERSON IS EXPOSED TO A TRIGGER SUBSTANCE, CALLED AN ALLERGEN, TO WHICH THEY HAVE ALREADY BECOME SENSITIZED BY A PREVIOUS EXPOSURE. ANAPHYLACTIC SHOCK CAN LEAD TO DEATH.

EVEN IF YOU'RE ATTACKED, YOU CAN RUN AWAY WHENEVER YOU WANT!
KUH KUH KUH!
YOU'VE GOT LESS TO WORRY ABOUT HERE THAN WITH THAT BOMB.
SFX: POSU (PLOP)
COME TO THE LOCATION WRITTEN ON IT. WE'LL PLAY OUR GAME THERE.
SEE YOU IN AN HOUR.
THERE'S A NOTE INSIDE THAT LITTLE GUY.
!?
IF YOU'VE GOT THE GUTS, THIS SHOULD BE NOTHING.
ZAWA (WOOO)
THINK LONG AND HARD BEFORE YOU COME...
...ABOUT IF YOU WANT TO RISK YOUR LIFE GETTING MIXED UP WITH THE BLADE CHILDREN.

W-
WAIT, ASAZU-KI!!
HOW'D YOU KNOW I WAS ALLERGIC TO WASPS AND BEES?
I'VE HARDLY TOLD ANYONE ABOUT THAT.
NOT EVEN MY SISTER OR PARENTS KNEW!
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?
WELL, YOUR BIG BROTHER TOLD ME.
?!
HMPH.

WHAT'S MY BROTHER UP TO!?
WHAT'S HE WANT WITH ME!?
ASK KIYOTAKA THAT!
I DON'T GET WHAT THAT GUY'S THINKING!
ははははは
HA HA HA HA HA!
THIS IS REALLY SERIOUS.
YOU CAN'T LET HIM PROVOKE YOU.
I KNOW.
ZUBO (SWIPE)
BUT WITH SONOBE DEAD, THIS IS THE SHORTEST PATH TO REACHING MY BROTHER.
I CAN'T SAY HOW DANGER-OUS THIS COULD GET.

I KNOW HOW SCARED HE WAS FROM THE BOMB THREAT, SO THIS CHARADE'S POINTLESS...
BUT THIS GUY...
...ISN'T SOMEONE WE CAN AVOID.
宮下総合病院
WE'RE DONE HERE. REMOVE THE BODY.

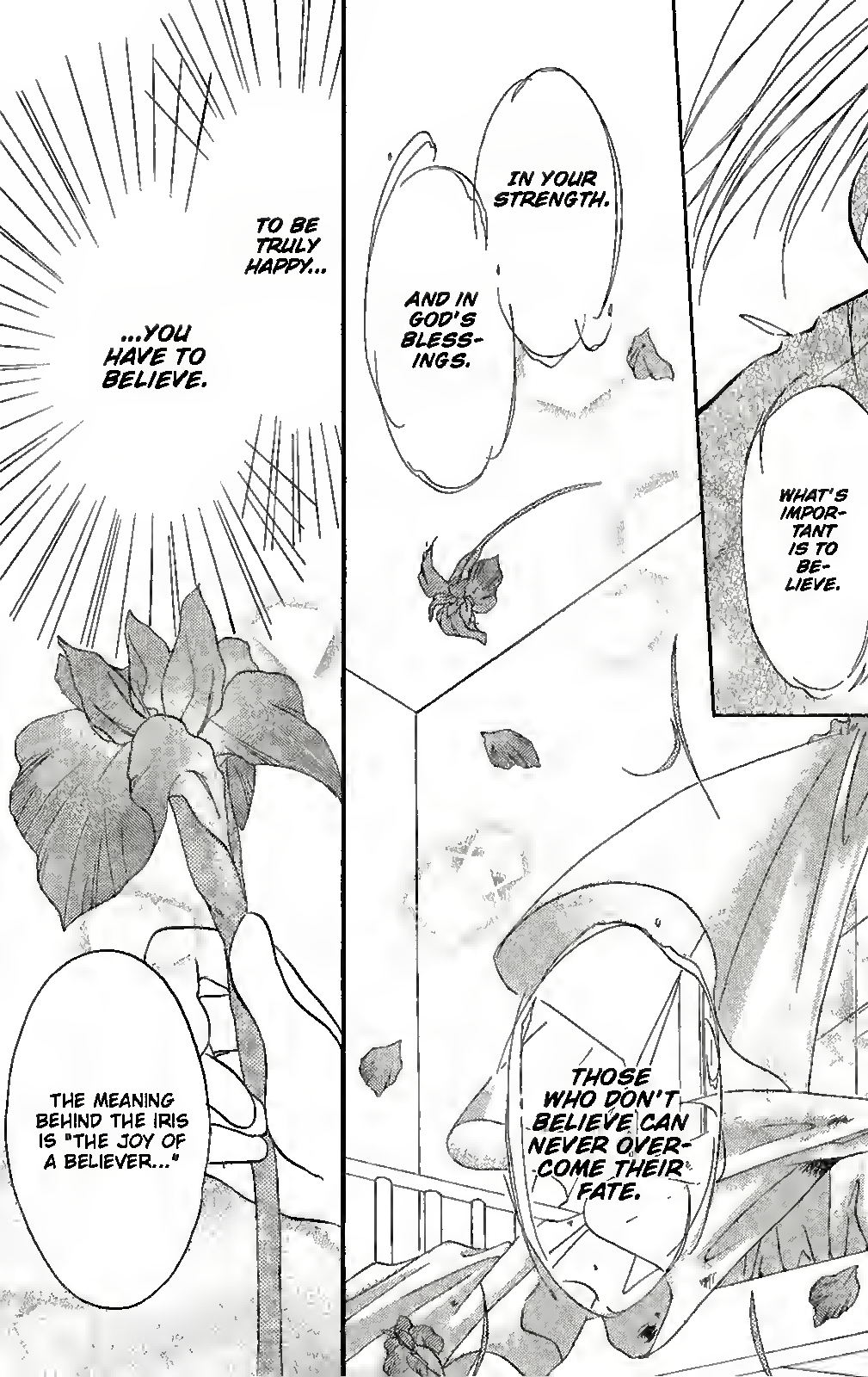
EH?
HIRA (FLUTTER)
BUWA (WHOOSH)
!!
WHAT IS THIS!?

MA-
DOKA...
THE MEANING BEHIND THE IRIS IS...
"...THE JOY OF A BELIEVER..."
NARUMI JUNIOR...
MAKE ME BELIEVE.

JUST AS KIYOTAKA SAID...
MAKE ME BELIEVE THAT YOU REALLY CAN SAVE THE BLADE CHILDREN...
...DON'T GET YOURSELF KILLED NOW...
IF YOU REALLY CAN...

CHAPTER TEN

THE JOY OF A BELIEVER (PART II)


THOSE WHO DON'T BELIEVE CAN NEVER OVERCOME THEIR FATE.
WHAT'S IMPORTANT IS TO BELIEVE.
IN YOUR STRENGTH.
AND IN GOD'S BLESSINGS.
TO BE TRULY HAPPY...
...YOU HAVE TO BELIEVE.
THE MEANING BEHIND THE IRIS IS "THE JOY OF A BELIEVER..."

KIYOTAKA-SAN...
NOW...
...WHAT IS IT YOU'RE TELLING ME TO BELIEVE IN...?
ZARI (SCUFF)
SO YOU CAME.

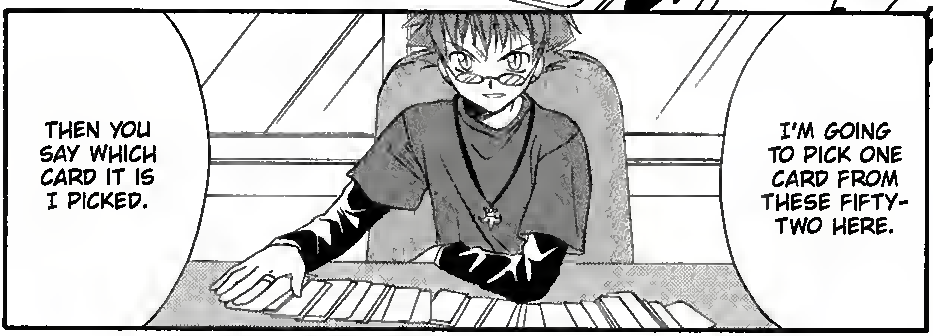
MY SUZUME-BACHI ARE IN A GOOD MOOD.
COME SEE.
ABOUT MY BROTHER.
TELL ME EVERYTHING YOU KNOW.
KUSHA (CRUSH)
.....

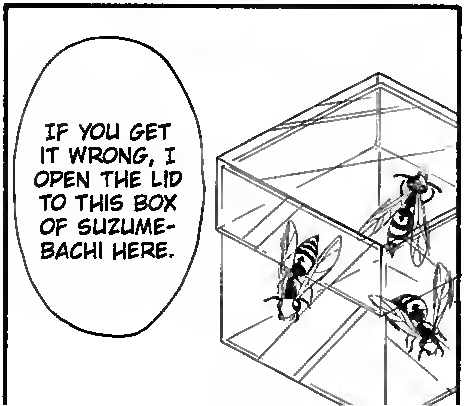
SFX: KURU (TURN)
...FOLLOW ME.
WITH THE RECENT DECLINE IN BIRTHRATES, THERE ARE MORE CLOSED SCHOOLS THAN YOU'D THINK.
THIS IS ONE OF THEM.
SINCE I DIDN'T GET PERMISSION TO USE THIS PLACE...
...KEEP IT DOWN, 'KAY?
GACHA (KACHAK)
来賓室
SIGN: VISITORS' LOUNGE

OVER HERE.
パタン
PATAN (SHUT)
SU (PASS)
ドカ
DOKA (SIT)

TRIED TO CLEAN UP BUT YOU'LL HAVE TO EXCUSE THE SMELL OF MOLD...
GI (CREAK)
SO.
WHAT DO YOU WANT ME TO DO?
...AND THE LACK OF A CHAIR FOR THE LITTLE LADY.
SU (RAISE)
JUST WHAT WE DID EARLIER...
PICK THE RIGHT CARD.

SA (FLAP)
ZARA (SHFT)


I'M GOING TO PICK ONE CARD FROM THESE FIFTY-TWO HERE.
THEN YOU SAY WHICH CARD IT IS I PICKED.


IF YOU GET IT WRONG, I OPEN THE LID TO THIS BOX OF SUZUME-BACHI HERE.

IF YOU GET IT RIGHT, YOU WIN.

JUST BECAUSE YOU OPEN THE LID, THOUGH, DOESN'T MEAN THEY'RE GOING TO ATTACK ME.
DON'T WORRY, THEY WON'T MISS.
REMEMBER THAT NOTE WITH THE ADDRESS TO THIS PLACE?
WELL, I SOAKED IT WITH A PHEROMONE THAT ATTRACTS SUZUMEBACHI.
WITH THAT SCENT ALL OVER YOU, YOU'RE THEIR PRIME TARGET.
BUT DOESN'T THAT JUST PUT US AT AN OVERWHELMING DISADVANTAGE!?
YOU'VE MADE IT A LIFE-OR-DEATH GAME!!
OH.
THEN I'LL DO YOU A SPECIAL FAVOR.

I'LL GIVE YOU FOUR CHANCES TO ASK ME A QUESTION.
I CAN ANSWER ONLY "YES" OR "NO" TO THEM.
DEPENDING ON YOUR QUESTIONS, YOUR CHANCES AT GUESSING CORRECTLY COULD BECOME TIGHTER THAN A LOUSY 1/52.
AND YOU MIGHT GET SOMETHING WITH WHICH YOU CAN GAUGE MY MENTALITY.
THAT WAY, YOU CAN BE SURER OF YOUR DECISION BEFORE YOU GO WITH IT.
SO? WHAT DO YOU THINK?
NII (SMIRK)

THERE'S NO PROOF THAT YOU WON'T GIVE ME FALSE ANSWERS.
I NEVER LIE WHEN IT COMES TO GAMES OR ANSWERING QUESTIONS.
I DON'T FIND UNFAIR GAMES FUN AT ALL.
JUST LIKE WITH THAT BOMB.
.....
OH?
YOU CAN QUIT IF YOU WANT TO, YOU KNOW?
BUT...
...WHEN YOUR BROTHER DID THIS, UNDER THE EXACT SAME CONDITIONS, HE PICKED THE RIGHT CARD, NO PROBLEM.

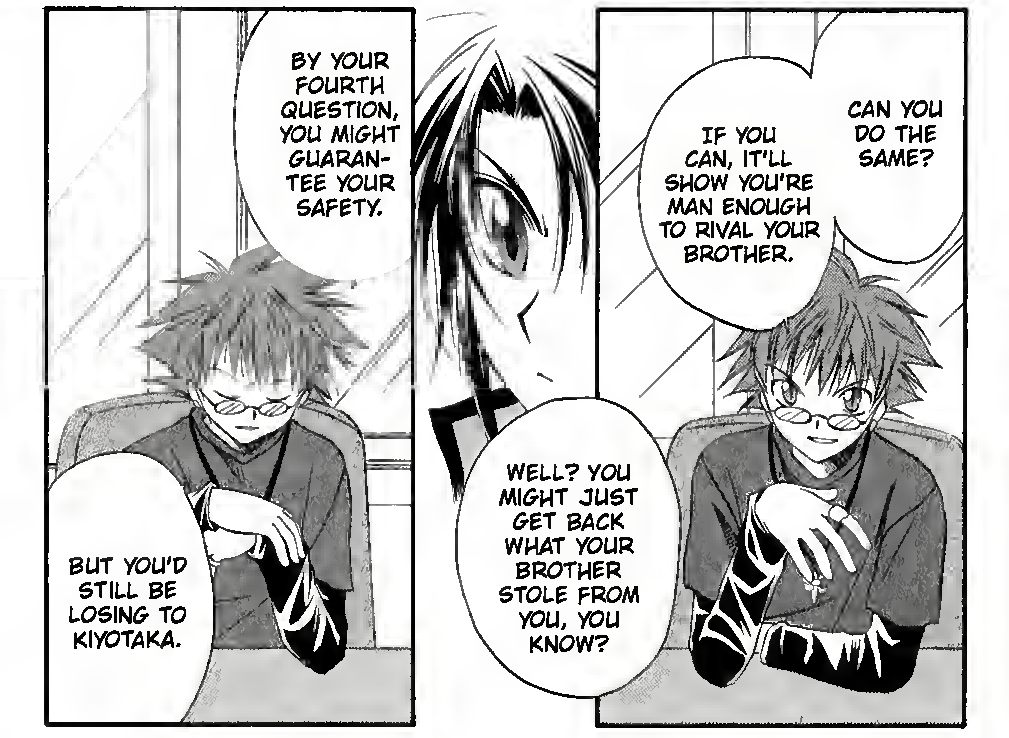
HOW ABOUT IT? YOU GONNA RUN AWAY?
GAKIIN (THUNK)
BEING LEAGUES BEHIND KIYOTAKA, YOU MUST HAVE SOME BAGGAGE...
THIS IS YOUR KNIFE, ISN'T IT?
I'M GIVING IT BACK.

N-NA-RUMI-SA-
PICK A CARD.
IF MY BROTHER COULD DO IT, THERE'S NO REASON I CAN'T.
TOUCHE!

TON (PAT)
HERE'S THE FATED CARD.
SFX: SU (FWIP)
NOW IT'S QUESTION TIME.
SEE IF YOU CAN DO IT WHILE HUMMING CARELESSLY LIKE YOUR BROTHER.
.....
I-IT'LL BE OKAY!
YOU WON'T GET IT WRONG, NARUMI-SAN! JUST LIKE WITH THE BOMB!
YOU GET FOUR QUES-TIONS, RIGHT?
YOU CAN NARROW IT DOWN ACCORD-ING TO THE COLOR AND SUIT.
THAT WAY, YOU CAN REALLY NARROW DOWN THE POSSIBLE CARDS.

AS LONG AS YOU'RE LUCKY, YOU CAN'T MISS!
YEAH, I KNOW.
AND YOU CAN THINK OF QUESTIONS THAT'LL READ HIS WAY OF THINKING.
THERE ARE PLENTY OF WAYS YOU CAN PICK THE RIGHT CARD.
.....
YOUR BROTHER ONLY ASKED ME ONE QUESTION.
OH, THAT REMINDS ME! WANNA HEAR SOMETHING INTERESTING?
HERE'S MY FIRST QUESTION.

WITH THAT ONE QUESTION, HE PUT HIS LIFE ON THE LINE AND CHOSE HIS CARD...
...AND WITH NO FEAR OR TREMBLING, GOT IT RIGHT!
!!


CAN YOU DO THE SAME?
IF YOU CAN, IT'LL SHOW YOU'RE MAN ENOUGH TO RIVAL YOUR BROTHER.
WELL? YOU MIGHT JUST GET BACK WHAT YOUR BROTHER STOLE FROM YOU, YOU KNOW?
BY YOUR FOURTH QUESTION, YOU MIGHT GUARANTEE YOUR SAFETY.
BUT YOU'D STILL BE LOSING TO KIYOTAKA.

YOU'LL LOSE TO YOUR BROTHER ALL OVER AGAIN!!
NARUMI-SAN!
YOU CAN'T LET HIM RILE YOU UP!
IF YOU GET STUNG BY THOSE BEES, YOU'LL DIE OF SHOCK!
!!
KA (BLUSH)
IT'S TOO DANGER-OUS TO RISK IT ALL ON JUST ONE QUESTION!
I HEARD ALL ABOUT IT, YOU KNOW!
HOW YOUR FIRST CRUSH WAS STOLEN BY KIYOTAKA!!
AND EVEN AFTER HE PULLED THAT ONE OFF ON YOU, YOU COULDN'T SAY ANY-THING!!

I'LL ALSO ONLY ASK ONE QUESTION!
...FINE THEN.
NEW LOVE'S FAR BETTER ANYWAY!
DON'T PAY ANY ATTENTION TO HIM! IT'S NOT A PROBLEM!
WHAT'S A FIRST CRUSH MATTER ANYWAY!?
NIYARI (SNEER)
ニヤリ
HARA HARA (FRET FRET)
HE'S JUST TRYING TO MAKE HIM LOSE FOCUS!
HA-WA-WA-AH!!
CAN'T HE SEE IT'S JUST A TRAP!?

.....
NO MATTER HOW GOOD HIS LUCK, THIS IS...
SFX: GU (CLENCH)
YOU...
YOU DECIDED WHAT CARD YOU WERE GOING TO PICK, EVEN BEFORE THE GAME STARTED, RIGHT?
YES!
GOOD QUESTION!
BUT THAT WASN'T THE QUESTION KIYOTAKA ASKED.
AND WITH THAT, YOU'RE OUT OF QUESTIONS.
NIYA NIYA (SMILE)

GIVE IT A SHOT!
JUST LIKE YOUR BROTHER DID!
SU (FWIP)
NOW, TELL ME! WHICH CARD DID I PICK!?
NA-RUMI-SAN!
DON'T BE SO STUB-BORN!!
NA-RUMI-SAN!

ANSWER ME!
.....
...A-SA-ZU-KI.
AMANE
NI (SMILE)
YOU REALLY THOUGHT YOU'D WIN THAT WAY?
!?

WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?
YOU SURE MY BROTHER DIDN'T ASK THIS QUESTION?
"YOU'RE A DIRTY GUY, AREN'T YOU?"
SFX: PIKU (PERK)
JUDGING BY THE WAY YOU KILLED SONOBE AND HOW YOU'VE BEEN ACTING, IT'S OBVIOUS HOW DETESTABLE YOU ARE.
THERE'S NO NEED FOR ME TO ASK THE SAME QUESTION AS MY BROTHER.
YOU'RE A DIRTY GUY.
SO EVEN IF IT MEANS CHEATING YOUR ENEMY, THERE'S NO WAY IN THE WORLD YOU'D GIVE THEM SOME KIND OF ADVANTAGE.
EVEN IF YOU DON'T LIE...
...YOU CAN STILL DUPE YOUR OPPONENT.

FROM THE GET-GO, YOU DIDN'T HESITATE TO DISCARD THE JOKER.
WHY WOULD YOU GET RID OF ONE CARD TO UP MY CHANCES OF WINNING?
SO YOU MUST'VE HAD SOME ULTERIOR MOTIVE FOR DOING THAT.
WHY'D YOU EVEN DO THAT?
YOU'RE NOT A NICE GUY LIKE THAT.
SFX: SU (FWIP)
スッ
IN OTHER WORDS...
YOU DIDN'T SAY ANYTHING WHEN YOU DISCARDED THIS FROM THE DECK.
AH! THE DESIGN ON THE BACK!!
YOU ALSO DIDN'T SAY ANYTHING ABOUT THIS BEING FROM THE SAME DECK OR WHETHER THE JOKER WAS GOING TO BE USED IN THE GAME.
IT'S THE JOKER FROM A TOTALLY DIFFERENT DECK OF CARDS!

SO IT'S TRUE THAT...
...YOU DIDN'T TELL ANY LIES.
YOU SAID YOU WERE PLAYING WITH FIFTY-TWO CARDS BUT IF YOU'D DISCARDED ANOTHER CARD OTHER THAN THE JOKER BEFOREHAND, THEN THE NUMBER WOULDN'T CHANGE.
THE REAL JOKER WASN'T DISCARDED.
YOU WANTED TO HIDE THE FACT THAT THE JOKER WAS STILL IN THE DECK OF CARDS I COULD CHOOSE FROM.
THE TRAP ITSELF HELPED ME PICK OUT THE FATED CARD.
...IT ONLY TELLS ME THAT'S WHAT THIS CARD IS.
SINCE YOU NEEDED TO DO THAT SO BADLY...

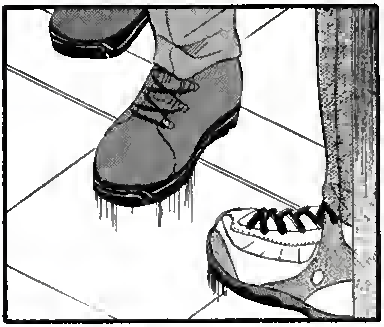
YOU REALLY THINK I'D LET YOU OFF WITH SUCH A SIMPLE TRAP?
BUT DON'T YOU THINK IT'S A LITTLE WEAK FOR A LIFE-OR-DEATH BET LIKE THIS?
I'M A BAD GUY, REMEMBER?
YOUR DEDUCTION MAKES SENSE.
YEAH, I DO.
YOUR CARD IS...
7 11
GU (GRAB)
I BELIEVE IN MY REASONING.
I'M NOT GOING TO BE AFRAID OR SHAKE IN MY BOOTS. I'M PUTTING MY LIFE ON THE LINE!
CHANGE!

THE JOKER!!
.....
YOU DID IT, NARUMI-SAN!!
NOW WILL YOU TELL ME ABOUT MY BROTHER?
...KUH.

KUH KUH KUH KUH!!
WHAT'S SO FUNNY?
KUH KUH KUH ...!
EVEN THE WAY YOU USE THAT FIRM TONE IS THE SAME!
BLOOD TIES ARE A SCARY THING!
YOU PICKED THE RIGHT CARD WITH THE SAME REASONING KIYOTAKA USED!
SFX: GATA (CLATTER)
IT'S A LONG STORY SO...
...LET'S TALK NEXT DOOR.
...GOOD PERFOR-MANCE.

RIGHT THIS WAY.

MAKE YOURSELVES COMFORTABLE.



NI (SNEER)
SFX: BATAN!! (SLAM!?)
!?

THIS IS STAGE TWO!!
I NEVER SAID THE GAME WAS THE END OF IT!
WHAT THE HELL DO YOU THINK YOU'RE DOING, ASAZUKI!?
(FLAP)
!!
NARUMI-SAN! THERE'S SOMETHING OVER THERE!
...THIRTY-EIGHT OF THOSE BEES WILL COME FLYING OUT!!
IF I SWITCH THIS REMOTE CONTROL ON, THE GLASS CASE'LL OPEN WIDE AND...
THE DOOR IN THE HALLWAY SIDE HAS AN AUTOMATIC LOCK, AND IT'S ALREADY LOCKED!
PLUS THE WINDOWS WON'T OPEN!

AND JUST HOW WILL THIS TEST ME!?
SHOW ME IF YOU CAN AVOID ALL THOSE BEES FOR TEN MINUTES IN THAT AIRTIGHT ROOM!!
IF LUCK'S ON YOUR SIDE, YOU WON'T GET STUNG!
THAT'S IMPOS-SIBLE!
ASAZUKI! YOU TRYING TO KILL ME!?

BI (BEEP)
THAT'S RIGHT! I WANT YOU DEAD!!!
GAKO (OPEN)
YOU CAN'T SAVE THE BLADE CHILDREN ANYWAY!!
I DON'T BELIEVE IN ANYTHING...

BELIEF ONLY GETS YOU STABBED IN THE BACK.
GOD'S BLESS-INGS? HA!
WE BLADE CHILDREN NEVER HAD SUCH A THING FROM THE START!
GUSHA (CRUSH)
...NARUMI JUNIOR.

THE SAME GOES FOR YOU...
YOU CAN'T AVOID ALL THIRTY-EIGHT BEES!!
I WANT YOU TO DIE IN AGO-NY!!
HAAAHA HAHA!!

...I WON'T BE DY-ING.
I COULD TELL YOU WERE A BAD GUY.
EVER SINCE YOU FIRST LET OUT THAT SUZUME-BACHI IN THE PARK, I HAD AN IDEA HOW YOU'D DO IT.
I TOLD YOU, REMEM-BER?
THERE'S NO WAY YOU COULD'VE BROKEN THROUGH THE LOCK...
HOW'D YOU GET OUT OF THE ROOM!?
...IT CAN'T BE!
SORRY, BUT...
GII (CREAK)
!?
GACHA (KACHAK)

IT'S ONLY NATURAL YOU'D HAVE AN ESCAPE ROUTE READY, RIGHT?
I KNEW YOU'D BEEN PLANNING THAT FROM THE START.
IF YOU WERE GOING TO KILL ME WITH THOSE BEES, YOU WERE GOING TO NEED A LARGE NUMBER.
THAT'S WHEN THE IDEA FOR THAT OTHER ROOM CAME TO MIND.
I CRUMPLED UP THE NOTE YOU GAVE US...
I COULD PREDICT YOU WERE GOING TO LOCK THE DOOR.
THEN, IT WAS EASY GETTING OUT.
...AND THAT'S WHY THE AUTOMATIC LOCKING MECHANISM DIDN'T WORK.
SO WHEN YOU WERE ABOUT TO CLOSE THE DOOR ON THE HALLWAY SIDE, I BLOCKED THE HOLE FOR THE DEADBOLT.
...CAN YOU TELL ME WHAT I WANT TO KNOW?
NOW, AS PROMISED...

NI
(SMIRK)
...WHILE I MAY NOT LIE, I DON'T KEEP PROMISES.
PI
(BEEP)
NARUMI JUNIOR...
I FORGOT TO TELL YOU BUT...
!!!
BUSHU
(FWOOSH)

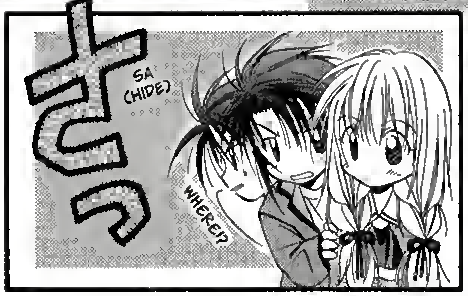
SO LONG, NARUMI JUNIOR!
HAAAHA-HAHA!
はーっはっはっはっ
!!
WAIT, ASAZUKI!!
WA-
LOUGH
はっ
I WON'T LET YOU RUN AWAY LIKE THIS!!!
DAM-MIT!
IN THE END, HE GOT AWAY!

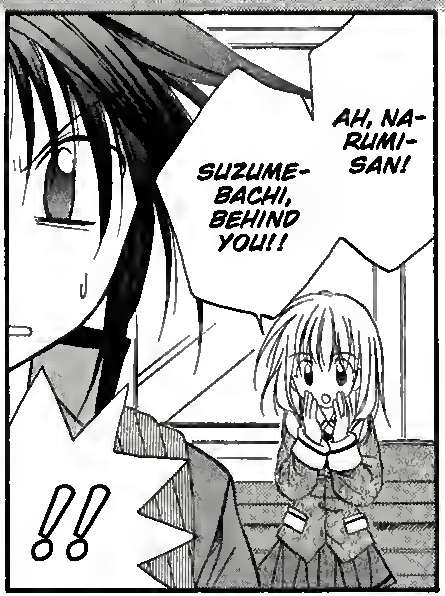
I DON'T GET WHAT THEY'RE THINKING.
BOTH HIS ALLIES AND MY BROTHER...
IT SEEMS MY BROTHER'S STILL ALIVE, BUT...
...WHAT'S HE SAYING, HE'LL HAVE ME DO...?
PYOKON (HOP)
ぴょこん
YOU'RE REALLY SOMETHING, NARUMI-SAN.
HUH?
YOU GUESSED THE RIGHT CARD!

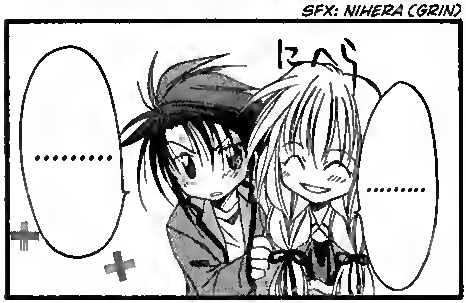
YOU BET YOUR LIFE ON YOUR REASONING AND GUESSED THE RIGHT CARD STRAIGHT OUT!
...BUT, ON TOP OF THAT, YOU NEVER FALTERED OR SHOWED FEAR!
IT'S IMPRESSIVE ENOUGH BEING ABLE TO KEEP YOUR COOL WHILE REASONING THROUGH THAT LIFE-RISKING BET...
AAH...
HAVE FAITH IN YOURSELF!
I JUST KNOW THAT, SOMEDAY, YOU'LL SURPASS YOUR BROTHER.
...HUH?
SHIRE (SHRUG)
I USED A TRICK.
SORRY FOR WASTING YOUR PRAISE, BUT I DIDN'T USE REASONING TO FIGURE OUT WHICH CARD IT WAS.

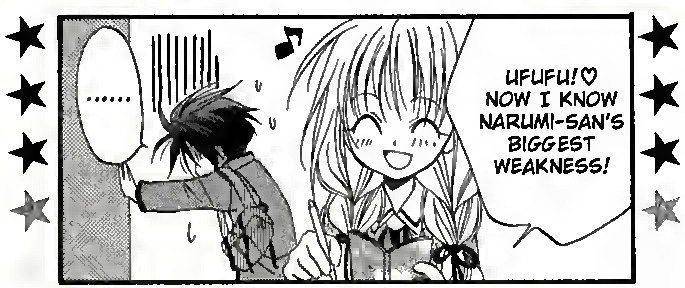
SU (SWISH)
BIN (GLEAM)
LOOK AT THIS KNIFE.
THE POLISHED BLADE ACTS AS A MIRROR, SEE?
DON'T TELL ME YOU... YOU...!
WHEN HE FIRST SAID IT'D BE A CARD-PICKING GAME...
...HE TOOK OUT HIS CARD AND I CALCULATED THE ANGLE I'D NEED FOR A GOOD REFLECTION WHEN I STABBED THE KNIFE INTO THE DESK.
THEN, SO IT WOULDN'T LOOK SUSPICIOUS, I MADE IT LOOK LIKE I WAS JUST ANGRY.
THAT'S WHEN I SAW WHICH CARD IT WAS.
IT WAS ONLY BECAUSE I SAW IT THAT I COULD CALL IT OUT WITHOUT HESITATION.
TH-THAT'S IMPRESSIVE IN ITS OWN WAY, TOO!
BUT THEN WHAT ABOUT ALL THAT REASONING!?

SEE, I DON'T HAVE THAT MUCH FAITH IN MY LUCK OR MY ABILITY.
NOTH-ING MORE THAN A SHOW.
PACHI (CLAP)
IF I'D LET HIM KNOW MY SNEAKY WAY OF GUESSING THE RIGHT CARD, IT WOULD HAVE UNDERMINED THE WHOLE MATCH.
BUT MY BROTHER DIDN'T NEED ANY TRICKS.
IF HE JUST BELIEVED, THE END RESULT ALWAYS WENT THE WAY HE WANTED IT TO.
THE IDEA OF LOSING NEVER OCCURRED TO HIM.
I CAN'T SURPASS MY BROTHER.



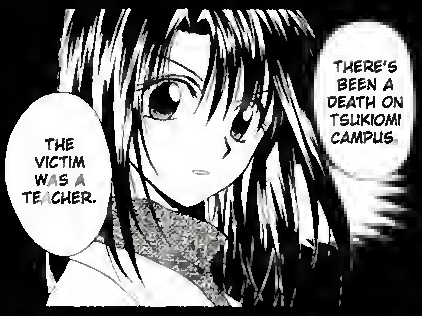






Spiral THE BONDS OF REASONING 2 THE END

THE SPIRAL OF DESTINY HAS BEGUN TO TURN...



THE MYSTERY DEEPENS...

JUST WHAT... ARE THEY AFTER!?

CAN THE BOY BELIEVE IN HIMSELF AND FACE HIS "DESTINY"?

IN THE NEXT VOLUME, AYUMU'S DESTINY IS ON THE MOVE.

To be continued. Please wait!

spiral work diary

~THE GLOSSARY USED BY OUR STAFF~

TO ALL THOSE WHO PICKED UP THIS BOOK, THANK YOU VERY MUCH!

AAAAWE-SOME!

WOOOOO!

HEY THERE, THIS IS EITA MIZUNO. VOLUME 2 OF SPIRAL IS ALREADY OUT!

IN TODAY'S EDITION, I'M GOING TO INTRODUCE WEIRD WORDS THAT HAVE BEEN COMING UP DURING WORK.

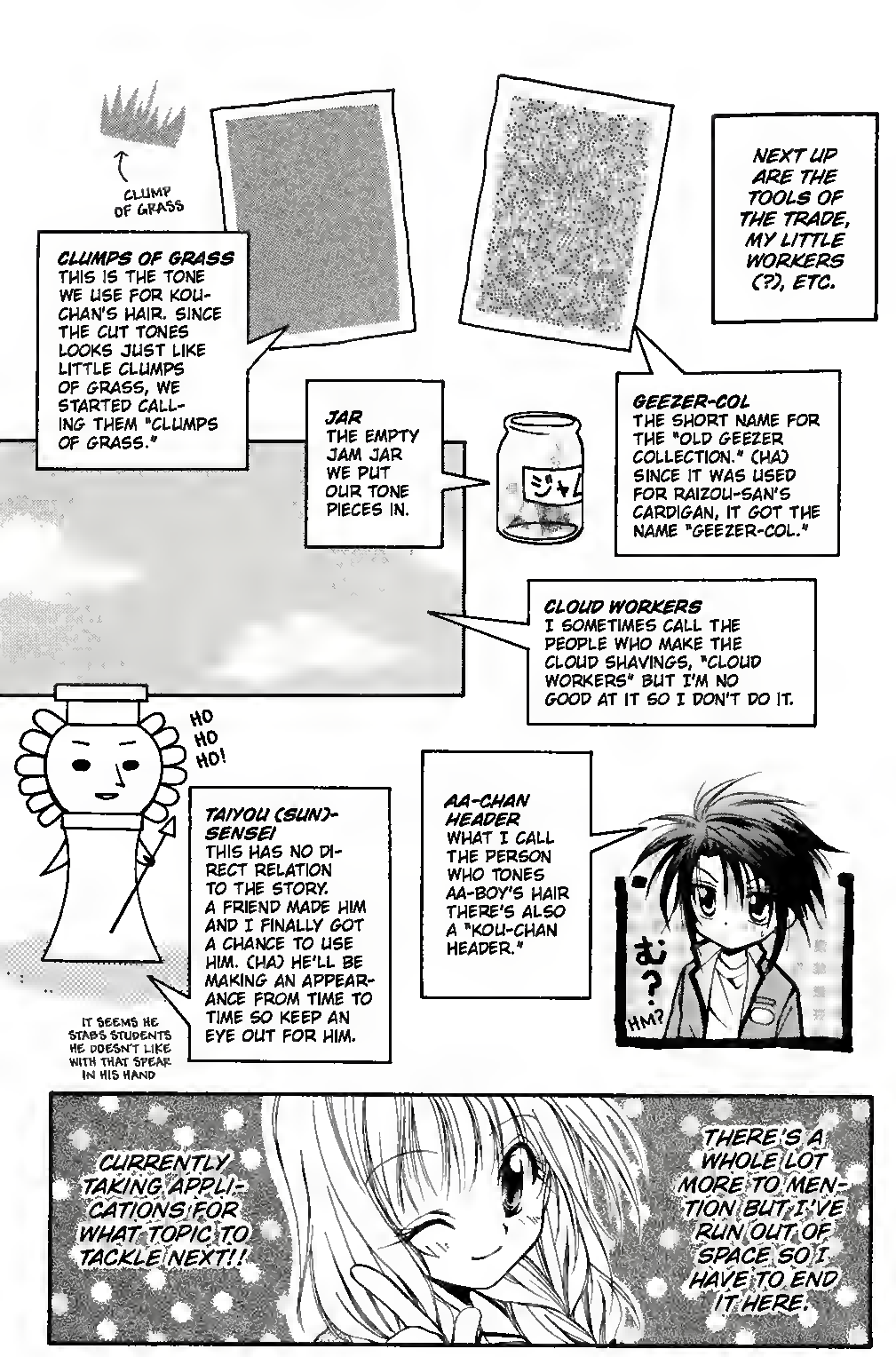
FIRST UP, THE NAMES OF OUR CHARACTERS.

AYUMU NARUMI
NICKNAME: AA-CHAN, AA-BOY
RECENTLY, I'VE EVEN BEEN TOLD "HUH, SO THEY WERE SIDEBURNS AFTER ALL." SORRY ABOUT THAT.

EYES RUTHERFORD
NICKNAME: EYES-SAMA
WE JUST CAN'T TAKE THAT SUFFIX "SAMA" OFF OF HIS NAME. ALSO, HE ALWAYS HAS SUCH A COLD LOOK TO HIM, DOESN'T HE?

KOUSUKE ASAZUKI
NICKNAME: KOU-CHAN
HE'S THE MOST POPULAR CHARACTER AMONGST THE SPIRAL STAFF. I LIKE HIM A LOT, TOO.

HIYONO YUIZAKI
NICKNAME: HIYO-HIYO
I WAS SO SURPRISED TO DISCOVER AN ENEMY IN A CERTAIN RPG NAMED HIYO-HIYO. AND SHE'S REALLY GROSS, TOO. UWAA!


CLUMP OF GRASS
CLUMPS OF GRASS
THIS IS THE TONE WE USE FOR KOU-CHAN'S HAIR. SINCE THE CUT TONES LOOKS JUST LIKE LITTLE CLUMPS OF GRASS, WE STARTED CALL-ING THEM "CLUMPS OF GRASS."
NEXT UP ARE THE TOOLS OF THE TRADE, MY LITTLE WORKERS (?), ETC.
JAR
THE EMPTY JAM JAR WE PUT OUR TONE PIECES IN.
GEEZER-COL
THE SHORT NAME FOR THE "OLD GEEZER COLLECTION." (HA) SINCE IT WAS USED FOR RAIZOU-SAN'S CARDIGAN, IT GOT THE NAME "GEEZER-COL."
CLOUD WORKERS
I SOMETIMES CALL THE PEOPLE WHO MAKE THE CLOUD SHAVINGS, "CLOUD WORKERS" BUT I'M NO GOOD AT IT SO I DON'T DO IT.
HO HO HO!
TAIYOU (SUN)-SENSEI
THIS HAS NO DI-RECT RELATION TO THE STORY. A FRIEND MADE HIM AND I FINALLY GOT A CHANCE TO USE HIM. (HA) HE'LL BE MAKING AN APPEAR-ANCE FROM TIME TO TIME SO KEEP AN EYE OUT FOR HIM.
IT SEEMS HE STABS STUDENTS HE DOESN'T LIKE WITH THAT SPEAR IN HIS HAND
AA-CHAN HEADER
WHAT I CALL THE PERSON WHO TONES AA-BOY'S HAIR THERE'S ALSO A "KOU-CHAN HEADER."
む？
HM?
CURRENTLY TAKING APPLI-CATIONS FOR WHAT TOPIC TO TACKLE NEXT!!
THERE'S A WHOLE LOT MORE TO MEN-TION BUT I'VE RUN OUT OF SPACE SO I HAVE TO END IT HERE.

AFTERWORD

Hello, this is Kyo Shirodaira. I'm delighted that Volume Two has been published. Thank you very much to all those who bought it!

Now then, in this volume the chapters strayed a bit from the basic mystery manga premises of "Whodunnit?" and "What was the trick?" My apologies to those who prefer that kind of plot. However, I hope you don't have trouble thinking of this, too, as just another form of mystery.

With the mystery behind the "Blade Children" deepening, Ayumu being put in danger, and new characters popping up, it's gotten to the point where even I, the creator, am wondering what will happen next.

At any rate, there might still be some chapters that stick to the basic formula but Ayumu and Hiyono's wits and bravery will keep opening up new paths so please look forward to their further adventures in deduction.

By the way, Hiyono-chan is such a cutie, isn't she? I know I'm saying this as the creator but I find her to be a very free-spirited, active, and good-looking girl.

Initially, when I was writing the original Chapters One and Two, I had no hand at character design so I just wrote Hiyono to play a minor role as the info-supplying assistant (at the time, I was actually writing the story with a lot of affection for the sister, Madoka, instead).

However, with Mizuno-san's designs came improvements that couldn't be any better. My manager even said it was good, so that must mean it was *really* good. This is just between us, but in the earliest stages of the story, her name wasn't "Hiyono," it was actually a very simple name. But we've decided

to keep that name *a trade secret*!

Anyway, Hiyono has unexpectedly turned into a great character and has far exceeded my expectations in this intense story by taking up a far more significant role indeed. (The truth is I hadn't planned for that at all. I was planning on having Madoka take the better role.) As this story goes on, I'm sure she'll take on even more surprising roles. Please look forward to them. Also, I feel that Rutherford, who also appeared this time around, will turn out to be more than he seems.

One last announcement...
The GAN-GAN website (http://enix.co.jp/gangan/) is still serializing the *Spiral: The Bonds of Reasoning* side-story novel. It's a basic mystery story focusing on Ayumu's brother, Kiyotaka, and his work as a detective. I'm working really hard on writing it. Madoka also shows up as her pre-marriage self (this is probably redundant, but I just really like Madoka). *[Editor's note: This Web site is no longer active.]*

You can still enjoy and easily understand this story even if you don't read the side-story but for those who have the chance, please check it out.

As time permits, I'm also working on a catch-the-criminal novel that comes with a present (trust me, this is absurdly hard to pull off), so for those of you who are interested in rare presents, please take up this challenge!

Well, I hope we meet again in Volume 3!

城平京

KYO SHIRODAIRA

Spiral 2

THE BONDS OF REASONING Omake!

MAGAZINE: GRAND PRIX EDITION

SFX: GATA (CLATTER)

TRANSLATOR'S NOTES

p11
"Raimon" contains the character for **"rai"** which means "lightning."

p36
Paulownia is a tree native to China and its wood is very light, fine-grained, soft, and warp-resistant. It is often used for chests, boxes, and clogs.

p38
The **Koujien** is a famous Japanese dictionary equivalent to Webster's or the Oxford English Dictionary. It's very thick and is a primary resource for the Japanese language.

p134
Suzumebachi, the insects that Kousuke cultivates and uses when threatening Ayumu, are giant Asian hornets. Their Japanese name means "sparrow bee," presumably because sometimes they are as big as sparrows. They are aggressive and their sting often requires medical attention.

SPIRAL
The Bonds of Reasoning ②

Kyo Shirodaira
Eita Mizuno

Translation: Christine Schilling

Lettering: Marshall Dillon and Terri Delgado

This book is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents are the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual events, locales, or persons, living or dead, is coincidental.

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